

S E R M O N S

O N

SEVERAL OCCASIONS:

I N

FOUR VOLUMES.

By *JOHN WESLEY*, M. A.

Late Fellow of LINCOLN-COLLEGE, OXFORD.

VOL. II.

THE FIFTH EDITION,

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Printed for G. WHITFIELD, New-Chapel, City-Road,
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in Town and Country.

1797.

2 1/2 2/3 SERMONS

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BY JOHN WILKINSON, M. A.
FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD

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S E R M O N XVII.

The Circumcision of the Heart.

Preached at St. MARY'S, OXFORD, before the
UNIVERSITY, on JANUARY 1, 1733.

ROMANS II. 29.

“Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit,
“and not in the Letter.”

1. **I**T is the melancholy remark of an excellent man, that “he who now preaches the most essential duties of Christianity, runs the hazard of being esteemed by a great part of his hearers, *a setter forth of new doctrines.*” Most men have *lived away* the substance of that Religion, the profession whereof they still retain, that no sooner are any of those truths proposed, which difference the Spirit of Christ from the spirit of the world, than they cry out, “Thou bringest strange things to our ears; we would know what these things mean.”—Though he is only preaching to them *Jesus and the Resurrection*, with the necessary consequence of it, “If Christ be risen, ye ought then to die unto the world, and to live wholly unto God.”

2. A hard saying this to the *natural man*, who is alive unto the world, and dead unto God, and one that he will not readily be persuaded, to receive as the truth of God, unless it be so qualified in the interpretation, as to have neither use nor signifi-
cancy left. He *receiveth not the words of the Spirit of God*, taken in their plain and obvious meaning. *They are foolishness unto him: neither indeed can he know them, because they are*

spiritually discerned: they are perceivable only by that spiritual sense, which in him was never yet awakened; for want of which he must reject as idle fancies of men, what are both the *wisdom* and the *power of God*.

3. That "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter;" that the distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, of one who is in a state of acceptance with God, is not either outward circumcision or baptism, or any other outward form, but a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of him that created it, is one of those important truths, that can only be *spiritually discerned*. And this the Apostle himself intimates in the next words, "Whose praise is not of men, but of God." As if he had said, "Expect not, whoever thou art, who thus followest thy great Master, that the world, the men who follow him not, will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Know that the *circumcision of the heart*, the seal of thy calling, is *foolishness with the world*. Be content to wait for thy applause, till the day of thy Lord's appearing. In that day shalt thou *have praise of God*, in the great assembly of men and angels."

I design, first, particularly to enquire, Wherein this Circumcision of the Heart consists? And, secondly, to mention some reflections, that naturally arise from such an enquiry.

I. 1. I am, first, to enquire, Wherein that circumcision of the heart consists, which will receive the praise of God? In general we may observe, it is that habitual disposition of soul, which in the sacred writings is termed Holiness, and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and by consequence, the being endued with those virtues, which were also in Christ Jesus, the being so *renewed in the image*

The Circumcision of the Heart.

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image of our mind, as to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.

2. To be more particular. Circumcision of Heart, implies, Humility, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Humility, a right judgment of ourselves, cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from that undue opinion of our own abilities and attainments, which are the genuine fruit of a corrupted nature. This entirely cuts off that vain thought, *I am rich and wise, and have need of nothing*; and convinces us, that we are by nature "wretched and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." It convinces us, that in our best estate, we are of ourselves all sin and vanity; that confusion, and ignorance, and error, reign over our understanding; that unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions, usurp authority over our will: in a word, that there is no sound part in our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course.

3. At the same time we are convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves; that without the Spirit of God we can do nothing but add sin to sin: that it is He alone *who worketh in us* by his almighty power, either *to will or do* that which is good; it being as impossible for us even to think a good thought, without the supernatural assistance of his Spirit, as to create ourselves, or to renew our whole souls in righteousness and true holiness.

4. A sure effect of our having formed this right judgment, of the sinfulness and helplessness of our nature, is a disregard of that *honour which cometh of man*, which is usually paid to some supposed excellency in us. He who knows himself, neither desires nor values the applause which he knows he deserves not. It is therefore "a very small thing with him, to be judged by man's judgment." He has all reason to think, by comparing what it has said either for or against him, with what he feels in

his own breast, that the world, as well as the god of this world, was a *liar from the beginning*. And even as to those who are not of the world, though he would chuse, if it were the will of God, that they should account of him as of one desirous to be found a faithful steward of his Lord's goods, if haply this might be a means of enabling him to be of more use to his fellow-servants, yet as this is the one end of his wishing for their approbation, so he does not at all rest upon it. For he is assured, that whatever God wills, he can never want instruments to perform; since he is able even of these stones, to raise up servants to do his pleasure.

5. This is that lowliness of mind, which they have learned of Christ, who follow his example and tread in his steps. And this knowledge of their disease, whereby they are more and more cleansed from one part of it, pride and vanity, disposes them to embrace, with a willing mind, the second thing implied in *circumcision of heart*, that faith which alone is able to make them whole, which is the one medicine given under heaven to heal their sickness.

6. The best guide of the blind, the surest light of them that are in darkness, the most perfect instructor of the foolish, is Faith. But it must be such a faith as is "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds," to the overturning all the prejudices of corrupt Reason, all the false maxims revered among men; all evil customs and habits; all that *wisdom of the world* which is *foolishness with God*; as "casteth down imaginations [reasonings] and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

7. *All things are possible to him that thus believeth: the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he sees what is his calling, even to glorify God, who*
bath

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hath bought him with so high a price, in his body and in his spirit, which now are God's by redemption, as well as by creation. He feels what is the exceeding greatness of his power, who as he raised up Christ from the dead, so is able to quicken us, dead in sin, by his Spirit which dwelleth in us. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith;" that faith which is not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, and in particular to those important truths; "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: He bare our sins in his own body on the tree: He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:" * but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts; a divine evidence or conviction of his love, his free unmerited love to me a sinner; a sure confidence in his pardoning mercy, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost: a confidence, whereby every true believer is enabled to bear witness, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; that I have an Advocate with the Father; that Jesus Christ the righteous is my Lord, and the propitiation for my sins." I know he hath loved me, and given himself for me. He hath reconciled me, even me to God; and I have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

8. Such a faith as this, cannot fail to shew evidently the power of him that inspires it, by delivering his children from the yoke of sin, and purging their consciences from dead works: by strengthening them so, that they are no longer constrained to obey sin in the desires thereof; but instead of yielding their members unto it, as instruments of unrighteousness, they now yield themselves entirely "unto God, as those that are alive from the dead."

* N. B. The following part of this paragraph is now added to the Sermon formerly preached.

9. Those

9. Those who are thus by faith born of God, have also *strong consolation through hope*. This is the next thing which the *circumcision of the heart* implies: even the testimony of their own spirit, with the Spirit which witnesseth in their hearts, that they are the children of God. Indeed it is the same Spirit who works in them that clear and chearful confidence, that their heart is upright toward God; that good assurance, that they now do, through his grace, the things which are acceptable in his sight; that they are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure therein to the end. It is he who giveth them a lively expectation of receiving all good things at God's hand; a joyous prospect of that *crown of glory, which is reserved in heaven* for them. By this anchor a Christian is kept steady in the midst of the waves of this troublesome world, and preserved from striking upon either of those fatal rocks, Presumption or Despair. He is neither discouraged by the misconceived severity of his Lord, nor does he "despise the riches of his goodness." He neither apprehends the difficulties of the race set before him, to be greater than he has strength to conquer, nor expects them to be so little as to yield him the conquest, till he has put forth all his strength. The experience he already has in the Christian warfare, as it assures him, his "labour is not in vain," if whatever his hand findeth to do, he doth it with his might;" so it forbids his entertaining so vain a thought, as that he can otherwise gain any advantage, as that any virtue can be shewn, any praise attained, by *faint hearts and feeble hands*: or indeed by any but those who pursue the same course with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "I [says he,] so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

10. By the same discipline is every good soldier of Christ, to "innuie himself to endure hardships." Confirmed and strengthened by this, he will be able not only to renounce the *works of darkness*, but every appetite too and every affection, which is not subject to the law of God. For *every one*, saith St. John, "who hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure." It is his daily care, by the grace of God in Christ, and through the blood of the Covenant, to purge the inmost recesses of his soul, from the lusts that before posselt and defiled it; from uncleanness, and envy, and malice, and wrath, from every passion and temper, that is *after the flesh*, that either springs from, or cherishes his native corruption; as well knowing, that he whose very *body is the temple of God*, ought to admit into it nothing common or unclean; and that *holiness becometh that house for ever*, where the Spirit of holiness vouchsafes to dwell.

11. Yet lackest thou one thing, whosoever thou art, that to a deep humility, and a stedfast faith, hast joined a lively hope, and thereby in a good measure cleansed thy heart from its inbred pollution. If thou wilt be perfect, add to all these charity; add love, and thou hast the *circumcision of the heart*. "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Very excellent things are spoken of love; it is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue. It is not only the first and great command, but it is all the commandments in one. Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable or honourable; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, they are all comprised in this one word, Love. In this is perfection and glory and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

12. Not that this forbids us to love any thing besides God : it implies, that we *love our brother also*. Nor yet does it forbid us (as some have strangely imagined) to take pleasure in any thing but God. To suppose this, is to suppose the fountain of holiness, is directly the author of sin : since he has inseparably annexed pleasure to the use of those creatures, which are necessary to sustain the life he has given us. This therefore can never be the meaning of his command. What the real sense of it is, both our blessed Lord and his Apostles tell us too frequently and too plainly to be misunderstood. They all with one mouth bear witness, that the true meaning of those several declarations, "The Lord thy God is one Lord. Thou shalt have no other gods but me; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength; Thou shalt cleave unto him; the desire of thy soul shall be to his name:" is no other than this. The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake. The fruition of Him that is All in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with him that made them : the having "fellowship with the Father and the Son:" the being *joined to the Lord in one spirit*. One design you are to pursue to the end of time. The enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things, so far as they tend to this. Love the creature—as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole end as well as source of your being.

13. Have no end, no ultimate end but God. Thus our Lord, "One thing is needful." And if thine eye be singly fixt on this one thing, "thy whole body shall be full of light." Thus St. Paul,
 " This

"This one thing I do; I press toward the mark, for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus." Thus St. James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Thus St. John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The seeking happiness in what gratifies either the desire of the flesh, by agreeably striking upon the outward senses, the desire of the eye, of the imagination, by its novelty, greatness, or beauty; or the pride of life, whether by pomp, grandeur, power, or the usual consequence of them, applause and admiration; *is not of the Father, cometh not from, neither is approved by the Father of spirits; but of the world*; it is the distinguishing mark of those, who will not have him to reign over them.

II. 1. Thus have I particularly enquired, what that *Circumcision of Heart* is, which will obtain the praise of God. I am in the second place, to mention some Reflections, that naturally arise from such an enquiry, as a plain rule whereby every man may judge of himself, whether he be of the world or of God.

And, first, it is clear, from what has been said, That no man has a title to the praise of God, unless his heart is circumcised by humility, unless he is little, and base, and vile in his own eyes: unless he is deeply convinced of that inbred "Corruption of his nature, whereby he is very far gone from original righteousness," being prone to all evil, averse to all good, corrupt and abominable: having a "carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God; nor indeed can be:" unless he continually feels in his inmost soul, that without the Spirit of God resting upon

upon him, he can neither think, nor desire, nor act, any thing good or well-pleasing in his sight.

No man, I say, has a title to the praise of God, till he feels his want of God: nor indeed, till he seeketh that *honour which cometh of God only*: and neither desires nor pursues that which cometh of man, unless so far only as it tends to this.

2. Another truth which naturally follows from what has been said, is, that none shall obtain the honour that cometh of God, unless his heart be circumcised by faith; even a *faith of the operation of God*: unless refusing to be any longer led by his senses, appetites or passions, or even by that blind leader of the blind, so idolized by the world, natural Reason, he lives and *walks by faith*, directs every step, as "seeing him that is invisible, looks not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things that are not seen which are eternal," and governs all his desires, designs and thoughts, all his actions and conversations, as one who is entered in within the veil, where Jesus sits at the right-hand of God.

3. It were to be wished, that they were better acquainted with this faith, who employ much of their time and pains in laying another foundation; in grounding Religion, on "the eternal *fitness* of things," on "the intrinsic *excellence* of virtue," and the *beauty* of actions flowing from it: on the *reasons*, as they term them, of good and evil, and the *relations* of beings to each other. Either these accounts of the grounds of Christian duty, coincide with the scriptural, or not. If they do, why are well-meaning men perplexed, and drawn from the weightier matters of the law, by a cloud of terms, whereby the easiest truths are explained into obscurity. If they are not, then it behoves them to consider, who is the author of this new doctrine: whether he is likely to be *an angel from heaven*, who *preacheth another gospel* than that of Christ

Christ Jesus: though, if he were, God, not we, hath pronounced his sentence, *Let him be accursed.*

4. Our gospel, as it knows no other foundation of good works than faith, or of faith than Christ, so it clearly informs us, we are not his disciples, while we either deny him to be the Author, or his Spirit to be the Inspirer and Perfecter both of our faith and works. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He alone can quicken those who are dead unto God, can breathe into them the breath of Christian life, and so prevent, accompany, and follow them with his grace, as to bring their good desires to good effect. And "as many as are thus led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." This is God's short and plain account of true Religion and Virtue; and *other foundation can no man lay.*

5. From what has been said we may, thirdly, learn, That none is truly *led by the Spirit*, unless that "Spirit bear witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God:" unless he see the prize and the crown before him, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" so greatly have they erred, who have taught that in serving God, we ought not to have a view to our own happiness. Nay, but we are often and expressly taught of God, to have respect *unto the recompence of reward*; to balance the toil with the *joy set before us*, these *light afflictions* with that *exceeding weight of glory*. Yea, we are "aliens to the covenant of promise, we are without God in the world, until God of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again, unto a living hope, of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

6. But if these things are so, it is high time for those persons to deal faithfully with their own souls, who are so far from finding in themselves this joyful assurance, that they fulfil the terms and shall obtain the promises of that covenant, as to quarrel with the covenant itself, and blaspheme the terms

of it: to complain, "They are too severe, and that no man ever did, or shall live up to them!" What is this, but to reproach God, as if he were an hard master, requiring of his servants more than he enables them to perform: as if he had mocked the helpless works of his hands, by binding them to impossibilities; by commanding them to overcome, where neither their own strength, nor his grace was sufficient for them?

7. These blasphemers might almost persuade those, to imagine themselves guiltless, who in the contrary extreme, hope to fulfil the commands of God, without taking any pains at all. Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God, without striving, without agonizing first, *to enter in at the strait gate!* that one who was *conceived and born in sin*, and whose *inward parts are very wickedness*, should once entertain a thought of being purified as his Lord is pure, unless he *treads in his steps*, and *take up his cross daily*: unless he *cut off his right-hand*, and *pluck out the right-eye and cast it from him*; that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, passions, tempers, of being "sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body," without a constant and continued course of general self-denial:

8. What less than this can we possibly infer from the above cited words of St. Paul? Who—"living in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, who being full of signs and wonders and mighty deeds, who having been caught up into the third heaven;" yet reckoned (as a late author strongly expresses it) that all his virtues would be insecure, and even his salvation in danger, without his constant self-denial. "So run I, says he, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." By which he plainly teaches us, That he who does not thus run, who does not thus deny himself daily

daily, does *run uncertainly* and fighteth to as little purpose as he that *beateth the air*.

9. To as little purpose does he talk of *fighting the fight of faith*, as vainly hope to attain the crown of incorruption (as we may, lastly, infer from the preceding observations) whose heart is not circumcised by love. Cutting off both the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, engaging the whole man, body, soul and spirit, in the ardent pursuit of that one object, is so essential to a child of God, that "without it, whosoever liveth is counted dead before him." "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not Love, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so as to remove mountains, and have not Love, I am nothing. Nay, though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing."

10. Here then is the sum of the perfect law, this is the true *Circumcision of the Heart*. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. "Unto the place from whence all the rivers came," *thither* let them flow again. Other sacrifices from us he would not; but the living sacrifice of the heart he hath chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with him: for he is a jealous God. His throne will he not divide with another: he will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has him for its ultimate object. This is the way wherein those children of God once walked, who being dead, still speak to us, "Desire not to live but to praise his name; let all your thoughts, words and works tend to his glory. Set your heart firm on him, and on other things, only as they are in and

from him. Let your soul be filled with so entire a love of him, that you may love nothing but for his sake." "Have a pure intention of heart, a stedfast regard to his glory in all your actions." "Fix your eye upon the blessed hope of your calling, and make all the things of the world minister unto it." For then, and not till then, is that *mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus*, when in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we "pursue nothing in relation to him, and in subordination to his pleasure:" when we too, neither think, nor speak, nor ask, to fulfil our own *will*, but the *will of him that sent us*: when whether we "eat, drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God."

S E R M O N XVIII.

The MARKS of the NEW-BIRTH.

JOHN III. 8.

"So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

1. **H**OW is every one that is born of the Spirit? That is, *born again*; *Born of God*? What is meant by the being *born again*? The being *born of God*? Or, being *born of the Spirit*? What is implied in, The being a *son* or a *child of God*? Or, having the *Spirit of adoption*? That these privileges, by the free mercy of God, are ordinarily annexed to baptism, (which is thence termed by our Lord in the preceding verse, the being *born of water and of the Spirit*) we know; but we would know what these privileges are? What is the *New-Birth*?

2. Perhaps

2. Perhaps it is not needful to give a definition of this, seeing the Scripture gives none. But as the question is of the deepest concern, to every child of man, (since "except a man be born again, born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God") I propose to lay down the marks of it in the plainest manner, just as I find them laid down in Scripture.

I. 1. The first of these (and the foundation of all the rest) is Faith. So St. Paul,* "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." So St. John, † "To them gave he power ~~to~~ *right*, or *privilege*, it may rather be translated) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, [when they believed,] (not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh", not by natural generation, "nor of the will of man," like those children adopted by men, in whom no inward change is hereby wrought, but) of God." And again in his general Epistle, "§ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

2. But it is not a barely notional or speculative faith, that is here spoken of by the Apostle. It is not a bare assent to this proposition, "Jesus is the Christ;" nor indeed to all the propositions contained in our Creed, or in the Old and New Testament. It is not merely "an assent, to any, or all these credible things, as credible." To say this, were to say (which who could hear?) that the devils were born of God. For they have this faith. They trembling believe, both that Jesus is the Christ, and that all Scripture having been given by inspiration of God, is true as God is true. It is not only "an assent to divine truth, upon the testimony of God," or "upon the evidence of miracles." For they also heard the words of his mouth, and knew him to be a faithful and true

* Gal. iii. 26. † John i. 12, 13. § 1 John v. 1.

witness. They could not but receive the testimony he gave, both of himself, and of the Father which sent him. They saw likewise the mighty works which he did, and thence believed that he *came forth from God*. Yet notwithstanding this faith, they are still "reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

3. For all this is no more than a dead faith. The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath is *born of God*, is not only an assent, an act of the understanding, but a disposition which God hath wrought in his heart; "a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God." This implies, that a man first *renounces himself*; that in order to be *found in Christ*, to be accepted through him, he totally rejects all *confidence in the flesh*; that *having nothing to pay*, having no trust in his own works or righteousness of any kind, he comes to God, as a lost, miserable, self-destroyed, self-condemned, undone, helpless sinner; as one whose *mouth* is utterly *stopped*, and who is altogether *guilty before God*. Such a sense of sin (commonly called *despair*, by those who speak evil of the things they know not) together with a full conviction, such as no words can express, that of Christ only cometh our salvation, and an earnest desire of that salvation, must precede a living faith: a trust in him, who "for us paid our ransom by his death, and for us fulfilled the law in his life." This faith then, whereby we are born of God, is "not only a belief of all the Articles of our Faith, but also a true confidence of the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. An immediate and constant fruit of this faith, whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no not for an hour, is power over sin: power over outward sin, of every kind; over every evil word and work; for where-
soever

“foever” the blood of Christ is thus applied, it “purgeth the conscience from the dead works:” and over inward sin; for it *purifieth the heart* from every unholy desire and temper. This fruit of faith, St. Paul has largely described, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. “How shall we (saith he) who [by faith] are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.—Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Let not sin therefore reign, even in your mortal body, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead. For sin shall not have dominion over you.—God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin.—But being made free;”—the plain meaning is, God be thanked, that though ye were in time past the servants of sin, yet now “being free from sin, ye are become the servants of righteousness.”

5. The same invaluable privilege of the sons of God, is as strongly asserted by St. John; particularly, with regard to the former branch of it, namely, power over outward sin. After he had been crying out, as one astonished at the depth of the riches of the goodness of God, † “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is;” he soon adds, “§ Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” But some men will say, “True: whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin *habitually*.” *Habitually!* whence is that? I read it not. It is not written in the book. God,

† 1 John iii. 1, &c. § 1 John iii. 1, 9

plainly

plainly saith, "He doth not commit sin." And thou addest, *habitually*! Who art thou that *mendest* the oracles of God? That "addest to the words of this book?" Beware I beseech thee, lest God "add to thee, all the plagues that are written therein!" Especially when the comment thou addest is such, as quite swallows up the text: so that by this *καθοδὸν ὁλάσῃς*, this artful method of deceiving, the precious promise is utterly lost; by this *κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπων*, this tricking and shuffling of men, the Word of God is made of none effect. O beware, thou that thus takest from the words of this book, that taking away the whole meaning and spirit from them, leavest only what may indeed be termed a dead letter, lest God take away thy part out of the book of life!

6. Suffer we the Apostle to interpret his own words, by the whole tenor of his discourse. In the fifth verse of this chapter he had said, "Ye know that he (Christ) was manifested, to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." What is the inference he draws from this? " * Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." To his enforcement of this important doctrine, he premises an highly necessary caution: † "Little children, let no man deceive you," (for many will endeavour so to do; to persuade you that you may be unrighteous, that you may commit sin, and yet be children of God.) "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Then follows, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this, adds the Apostle, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." By this plain mark (the committing or not committing sin) are they distinguish-

* 1 John iii. 6. † Ver. 7.

ed from each other. To the same effect are those words in his fifth chapter, “* We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

7. Another fruit of this living faith is peace. For “† being justified by faith,” having all our sins blotted out, “we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This indeed our Lord himself, the night before his death, solemnly bequeathed to all his followers. § *Peace, saith he, I leave with you; (you who believe in God, and believe also in Me); my peace I give unto you.* “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And again, “|| These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace.” This is that “peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” that serenity of soul, which it hath not entered into the heart of a natural man to conceive, and which it is not possible for even the spiritual man to utter. And it is a peace which all the powers of earth and hell are unable to take from him. Waves and storms beat upon it, but they shake it not; for it is founded upon a Rock. It keepeth the hearts and minds of the children of God, at all times and in all places. Whether they are in ease or in pain, in sickness or health, in abundance or want, they are happy in God. In every state they have learned to be content, yea, to give thanks unto God through Christ Jesus: being well assured, that “whatsoever is, is best;” because it is his will, concerning them. So that in all the vicissitudes of life, their “*heart standeth fast believing in the Lord.*”

II. 1. A second scriptural mark of those who are born of God is Hope. Thus St. Peter, speaking of all the children of God, who were then

* Ver. 18. † Rom. v. 1. § John xiv. 27. || Ch. xvi. 33.

scattered

scattered abroad, faith, “ * Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” *Ελπίδα ζωῆς* A *lively* or *living* hope, saith the Apostle: because there is also a *dead* hope (as well as a dead faith) a hope which is not from God, but from the enemy of God and man; as evidently appears by its fruits: for, as it is the offspring of pride, so it is the parent of every evil word and work; whereas every man that hath in him this living hope, is “ holy as he that calleth him is holy:” every man that can truly say to his brethren in Christ, “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and we shall see him as he is, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

2. This hope termed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, † *πληροφορία πίστεως*, and elsewhere, || *πληροφορία ἐλπίδος* (in our translation, “ the full assurance of faith, and the full assurance of hope;” expressions the best which our language could afford, although far weaker than those in the original) as described in Scripture, implies, 1. The testimony of our own spirit or conscience, that we walk “ in simplicity and godly sincerity;” but, secondly and chiefly, The testimony of the Spirit of God, “ bearing witness with, or to, our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

3. Let us well observe, what is here taught us by God himself, touching the glorious privilege of his children. Who is it, that is here said to *bear witness*? Not our spirit only, but another; even the Spirit of God: he it is who “ beareth witness with our spirit.” What is it, he beareth witness of? “ § That we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”—“ if so be that we suffer with him (if we deny ourselves, if we take up our cross daily, if we chearfully endure persecution or re-

* 1 Pet. i. 3. † Heb. x. 22. || Heb. vi. 11. § Rom. vii. 16, 17.

proach for his sake) that we may also be glorified together." And in whom doth the Spirit of God bear this witness? In all who are the children of God. By this very argument does the Apostle prove in the preceding verses that they are so: "As many, saith he, as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again, to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."*

4. The variation of the phrase in the 15th verse, is worthy our observation. "Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" Ye, as many as are the sons of God, have in virtue of your sonship, received that self-same Spirit of Adoption, whereby *we* cry, Abba, Father. *We*, the Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, (for so the word may not improperly be understood) we, through whom you have believed, the "Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God." As *we* and *you* have one Lord, so we have one Spirit: as we have one Faith, so we have one Hope also. We and you are sealed with one *Spirit of promise*, the earnest of *yours* and of *our* inheritance: the same Spirit bearing witness with yours and with our spirit, "that we are the children of God."

5. And thus is the Scripture fulfilled, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." For it is easy to believe, that though sorrow may precede this witness of God's Spirit with our spirit, (indeed *must*, in some degree, while we groan under fear, and a sense of the wrath of God abiding on us) yet as soon as any man feeleth it in himself, his "sorrow is turned into joy." Whatsoever his pain may have been before, yet as soon as that *is come, he remembreth the anguish no more, for joy*

* Rom. viii. 14, 15, 16.

that he is born of God. It may be, many of you have now sorrow, because you are "aliens from the common-wealth of Israel;" because you are conscious to yourselves that you have not this Spirit, that you are "without hope and without God in the world." But when the Comforter is come, " * then your heart shall rejoice; yea, your joy shall be full, and that joy no man taketh from you." " † We joy in God," (will ye say,) "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement: by whom we have access into this grace," this state of grace, of favour, or reconciliation with God, "wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Ye, saith St. Peter, whom " || God hath begotten again unto a lively hope, are kept by the power of God unto salvation—Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith—may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ—In whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Unspeakable indeed! It is not for the tongue of man to describe this joy in the Holy Ghost. It is *hidden manna, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.* But this we know, it not only remains but overflows in the depth of affliction. *Are the consolations of God small with his children, when all earthly comforts fail?* Not so. But when sufferings most abound, the consolation of his Spirit doth much more abound: insomuch that the sons of God "laugh at destruction when it cometh;" at want, pain, hell, and the grave; as knowing him who *hath the keys of death and hell*, as hearing even now the "great voice out of heaven, saying, § Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them,

* John xvi. 22. † Rom. v. 11. || 1 Pet. i. 5, &c.

§ Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are past away."

III. 1. A third scriptural mark of those who are born of God, and the greatest of all, is Love: even * "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them. † Because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" By this Spirit, continually looking up to God, as their reconciled and loving Father, they cry to him for their daily bread, for all things needful whether for their souls or bodies. They continually pour out their hearts before him, knowing || "they have the petitions which they ask of him." Their delight is in him. He is the joy of their heart; their *shield*, and their *exceeding great reward*. The desire of their soul is toward him: it is their *meat and drink to do his will*: and they are § "satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while their mouth praiseth him with joyful lips."

2. And, in this sense also, ¶ "Every one who loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him." His spirit rejoiceth in God his Saviour. He *loveth the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*: he is *so joined unto the Lord*, as to be *one spirit*. His soul hangeth upon him, and chuseth him as altogether lovely, "the chiefest among ten thousand." He knoweth, he feeleth what that means, ** "My beloved is mine, and I am his." †† "Thou art fairer than the children of men; full of grace are thy lips, because God hath anointed thee for ever!"

3. The necessary fruit of this love of God, is the love of our neighbour, of every soul which

* Rom. v. 5. † Gal. iv. 8. || 1 John v. 15. § Psalm lxiii. 5. ¶ 1 John v. 1. ** Cant. ii. 16. †† Psa. xlv. 2.

God hath made: not excepting our enemies, not excepting those who are now *despitefully using and persecuting us*: a love, whereby we love every man as ourselves, as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it still more strongly, teaching us to "love one another even as he hath loved us." Accordingly the commandment written in the hearts of all those that love God, is no other than this, "As I have loved you, so love ye one another." Now * *herein perceive we the love of God, in that he laid down his life for us. We ought then, as the Apostle justly infers, "to lay down our lives for our brethren."* If we feel ourselves ready to do this, then do we truly love our neighbour. Then † "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we thus love our brethren." † *Hereby know we that we are born of God, that we "dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his loving Spirit."* For § "Love is of God, and every one that thus loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God."

4. But some may possibly ask, Does not the Apostle say, ¶ "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" Yea; and this is the love of our neighbour also, in the same sense as it is the love of God. But what would you infer from hence? That the keeping the outward commandments, is all that is implied in loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, and soul, and strength, and in loving your neighbour as yourself? That the love of God is not an affection of the soul, but merely an *outward service*? And that the love of our neighbour is not a disposition of heart, but barely a course of *outward works*? To mention so wild an interpretation of the Apostle's words, is sufficiently to confute it. The plain indisputable meaning of that text is, *this is the sign or proof of the love of God, of our keep-*

* 1 John iii. 16. † Ver. 14. ‖ Chap. iv. 13.

§ 1 John iv. 7. ¶ 1 John v. 3.

ing the first and great commandment, to keep all the rest of his commandments. For true love, if it be once shed abroad in our heart, will constrain us so to do : since whosoever loves God with all his heart, cannot but serve him with all his strength.

5. A second fruit then of the love of God, (so far as it can be distinguished from it) is universal obedience to him we love, and conformity to his will : obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external : obedience of the heart and of the life, in every temper, and in all manner of conversation. And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein is, the being *zealous of good works* ; the hungering and thirsting to do good in every possible kind, unto all men ; the rejoicing to *spend and be spent for them*, for every child of man, not looking for any recompense in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.

1. Thus have I plainly laid down those marks of the New-Birth, which I find laid down in Scripture. Thus doth God himself answer that weighty question, What is it to be born of God ? Such, if the appeal be made to the Oracles of God, is *every one that is born of the Spirit*. This it is, in the judgment of the Spirit of God, to be a son or a child of God. It is, so to believe in God through Christ, as *not to commit sin*, and to enjoy at all times and in all places, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." It is, so to *hope* in God through the Son of his love, as to have not only the *testimony of a good conscience*, but also the Spirit of God "bearing witness with your spirits, that ye are the children of God : " whence cannot but spring, the "rejoicing evermore in him through whom ye have received the atonement." It is so to *love* God, who hath thus loved you, as you never did love any creature : so that ye are constrained to love all men as yourselves ; with a love not only ever burning in your hearts, but

flaming out in all your actions and conversation, and making your whole life one *labour of love*, one continued obedience to those commands, "Be ye merciful, as God is merciful; Be ye holy, as I the Lord am holy; Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

2. Who then are ye that are thus born of God? Ye "know the things which are given to you of God." Ye well know, that ye are the children of God, and *can assure your hearts before him*. And every one of you who has observed these words, cannot but feel and know of a truth, whether at this hour, (answer to God and not to man!) you are thus a child of God or no? The question is not, what you was made in baptism: (do not evade.) But, what are you now? Is the Spirit of adoption now in your heart? To your own heart let the appeal be made. I ask not, whether you *was* born of water and of the spirit. But *are* you *now* the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you? I allow you *was circumcised with the circumcision of Christ*, (as St. Paul emphatically terms Baptism.) But does the Spirit of Christ and of glory *now* rest upon you? Else *your circumcision is become uncircumcision*.

3. Say not then in your heart, I *was once* baptized, therefore I *am now* a child of God? Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common-swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners? What think you? Are these now the children of God? Verily I say unto you, whosoever you are, unto whom any one of the preceding characters belong, "ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do." Unto you I call, in the name of him whom you crucify afresh, and in his words to your circum-

cised

cised predeceffors, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?"

4. How indeed, except ye be born again! For ye are now dead in trespasses and sins. To say then, that ye cannot be born again, that there is no new-birth but in baptism, is to seal you all under damnation, to consign you to hell, without help, without hope. And perhaps some may think this just and right. In their zeal for the Lord of hosts, they may say, "Yea, cut off the sinners, the *Amalekites*! Let these *Gibeonites* be utterly destroyed! They deserve no less."—No; nor I: nor you.—Mine and your desert, as well as theirs, is hell. And it is mere mercy, free undeserved mercy, that *we* are not now in unquenchable fire. You will say, "But we are washed, we were born again of water and of the spirit." So *were* they. This therefore hinders not at all, but that ye may *now* be even as they. Know ye not, that "what is highly esteemed of men is an abomination in the sight of God?" Come forth, ye "saints of the world," ye that are honoured of men, and see who will cast the first stone at them, at these wretches, not fit to live upon the earth, these common harlots, adulterers, murderers. Only learn ye first what that meaneth, * "He that hateth his brother is a murderer."—† "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."—|| "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world, is enmity with God?"

5. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye also must be born again. Except ye also be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God.* Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye *were* born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made "children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?" But notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil. Therefore ye must be born

* 1 John iii. 15. † Matt. v. 28. || James iv. 4.

again. And let not Satan put it into your heart, to cavil at a word, when the thing is clear. Ye have heard, what are the marks of the children of God: all ye who have them not on your souls, baptized or unbaptized, must needs receive them, or without doubt ye will perish everlastingly. And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this, That those who were made the children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive *power, to become the sons of God*: that they may receive again what they have lost, even the *Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father!*

6. Amen, Lord Jesus! May every one who prepareth his heart yet again to seek thy face, receive again that spirit of adoption, and cry out, Abba, Father! Let him now again have power, so to believe in thy name as to become the child of God; as to know and feel he hath *redemption in thy blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, and that he cannot commit sin because he is born of God. Let him be now begotten again unto a living hope, so as to purify himself, as thou art pure! And because he is a son, let the spirit of love and of glory, rest upon him, cleansing him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and teaching him to *perfect holiness in the fear of God!*

S E R M O N X I X .

The Great PRIVILEGE of those that are
Born of God.

I JOHN III. 9.

“ Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin.”

1. **I**T has been frequently supposed, that the being born of God was all one with the being justified; that the New-Birth and Justification were only different expressions, denoting the same thing: it being certain on the one hand, that whosoever is justified, is also born of God; and on the other, that whoever is born of God, is also justified: yea, that both these gifts of God are given to every believer in one and the same moment. In one point of time his sins are blotted out, and he is born again of God.

2. But though it be allowed, that Justification and the New-Birth are in point of time inseparable from each other, yet they are easily distinguished, as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature. Justification implies only a relative, the New-Birth a real change. God in justifying us, does something *for* us: in begetting us again, he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children. By the latter, our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favour, the other to the image of God. The one is, the taking away the guilt, the other, the taking away the power of sin. So that although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.

3. The

3. The not discerning this, the not observing the wide difference there is, between being justified and being born again, has occasioned exceeding great confusion of thought, in many who have treated on this subject: particularly when they have attempted to explain this great privilege of the children of God; to shew how *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.*

4. In order to apprehend this clearly, it may be necessary, First, to consider what is the proper meaning of that expression, *Whosoever is born of God*; and, Secondly, to enquire, in what sense he *doth not commit sin.*

I. 1. First, we are to consider, what is the proper meaning of that expression, *Whosoever is born of God.* And, in general, from all the passages of holy Writ, wherein this expression the being *born of God*, occurs, we may learn that it implies not barely the being baptized, or any outward change whatever; but a vast inward change, a change wrought in the soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; a change in the whole manner of our existence; for from the moment we are *born of God*, we live in quite another manner than we did before; we are, as it were, in another world.

2. The ground and reason of the expression is easy to be understood. When we undergo this great change, we may with much propriety be said *to be born again*, because there is so near a resemblance between the circumstances of the natural and of the spiritual birth; so that to consider the circumstances of the natural birth, is the most easy way to understand the spiritual.

3. The child which is not yet born, subsists indeed by the air, as does every thing which has life; but *feels* it not, nor any thing else, unless in a very dull and imperfect manner. It *hears* little, if at all, the organs of hearing being as yet closed up. It *sees* nothing, having its eyes fast shut, and
being

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being surrounded with utter darkness. There are, it may be, some faint beginnings of life, when the time of its birth draws nigh; and some motion consequent thereon, whereby it is distinguished from a mere mass of matter. But it has no *senses*; all these avenues of the soul are hitherto quite shut up. Of consequence, it has scarce any intercourse with this visible world: nor any knowledge, conception or idea, of the things that occur therein.

4. The reason why he that is not yet born, is wholly a stranger to the visible world, is, not because it is afar off. It is very nigh. It surrounds him on every side. But partly, because he has not those senses, they are not opened in his soul, whereby alone it is possible to hold commerce with the material world; and partly because so thick a veil is cast between, through which he can discern nothing.

5. But no sooner is the child born into the world, than he exists in a quite different manner. He now *feels* the air with which he is surrounded, and which pours into him from every side, as fast as he alternately breathes it back, to sustain the flame of life. And hence springs a continual increase of strength, of motion, and of sensation: all the bodily senses being now awakened, and furnished with their proper objects.

His eyes are now opened to perceive the light, which silently flowing in upon them, discovers not only itself, but an infinite variety of things, with which before he was wholly unacquainted. His ears are unclosed, and sounds rush in, with endless diversity. Every sense is employed upon such objects as are peculiarly suitable to it. And by these inlets, the soul having an open intercourse with the visible world, acquires more and more knowledge of sensible things, of all the things which are under the sun.

6. So

6. So it is with him that is born of God. Before that great change is wrought, although he subsists by him, in whom all that have life *live and move and have their being*, yet he is not *sensible* of God; he does not *feel*, he has no inward consciousness of his presence. He does not perceive that divine breath of life, without which he cannot subsist a moment. Nor is he sensible of any of the things of God. They make no impression upon his soul. God is continually calling to him from on high, but he heareth not; his ears are shut; so that *the voice of the charmer* is lost in him, *charm he never so wisely*. He seeth not the things of the Spirit of God, the eyes of his understanding being closed, and utter darkness covering his whole soul, surrounding him on every side. It is true, he may have some faint dawnings of life, some small beginnings of spiritual motion; but as yet he has no spiritual senses, capable of discerning spiritual objects. Consequently he “discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God. He cannot know them; because they are spiritually discerned.”

7. Hence he has scarce any knowledge of the invisible world, as he has scarce any intercourse with it. Not that it is afar off. No: he is in the midst of it: it encompasses him round about. The *other world*, as we usually term it, is not far from every one of us. It is above, and beneath and on every side. Only the natural man discerneth it not; partly, because he has no spiritual senses, whereby alone we can discern the things of God; partly, because so thick a veil is interposed, as he knows not how to penetrate.

8. But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed? His whole soul is now sensible of God, and he can say, by sure experience, *Thou art about my bed, and about my path; I feel thee in all my ways. Thou besettest me behind and before, and layest thy hand upon me.* The Spirit or Breath of God is immediately

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immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul. And the same breath, which comes from, returns to God: as it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving: love and praise and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained, but increased day by day; together with spiritual strength and motion and sensation. All the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of *discerning spiritual good and evil.*

9. *The eyes of his understanding are now open, and he seeth Him that is invisible.* He sees what is *the exceeding greatness of his power*, and of his love towards them that believe. He sees that God is merciful to him a sinner; that he is reconciled through the Son of his love. He clearly perceives both the pardoning love of God, and all his *exceeding great and precious promises.* *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, and doth shine, in his heart, to enlighten him with the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* All the darkness is now passed away, and he abides in the light of God's countenance.

10. His ears are now opened, and the voice of God no longer calls in vain. He hears and obeys the heavenly calling: he *knows the voice of his Shepherd.* All his spiritual senses being now awakened, he has a clear intercourse with the invisible world. And hence he knows more and more of the things which before *it could not enter into his heart to conceive.* He now knows what the peace of God is: what is joy in the Holy Ghost: what the love of God which is shed abroad in the hearts of them that believe in him through Christ Jesus. Thus the veil being removed, which before interrupted the light and voice, the knowledge
and

and love of God, he who is born of the Spirit, *dwelling in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.*

II. 1. Having considered the meaning of that expression, *Whoever is born of God*, it remains in the second place to enquire, in what sense he *doth not commit sin*.

Now one who is so born of God as hath been above described, who continually receives into his soul the breath of life from God, the gracious influence of his Spirit, and continually renders it back : one who thus believes and loves ; who by faith perceives the continual actings of God upon his spirit ; and a kind of spiritual reaction, returns the grace he receives in unceasing love, and praise, and prayer ; not only *doth not commit sin*, while he thus *keepeth himself* ; but so long as this *seed remaineth in him*, he *cannot sin*, because he is born of God.

2. By *sin*, I here understand, outward sin, according to the plain, common acceptation of the word : an actual, voluntary *transgression of the law* : of the revealed, written law of God : of any commandment of God, acknowledged to be such, at the time that it is transgressed. But *whosoever is born of God*, while he abideth in faith and love, and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only *doth not*, but *cannot* thus *commit sin*. So long as he thus believeth in God through Christ, and loves him, and is pouring out his heart before him, he cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God, either by speaking or acting what he knows God hath forbidden. So long as that *seed* which *remaineth in him*, that loving, praying, thankful faith, compels him to refrain from whatsoever he knows to be an abomination in the sight of God.

3. But here a difficulty will immediately occur : and one, that to many has appeared insuperable, and induced them to deny the plain assertion of the
Apostle,

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Apostle, and give up the privilege of the children of God.

It is plain in fact, that those whom we cannot deny to have been truly *born of God*, (the Spirit of God having given us in his word, this infallible testimony concerning them) nevertheless not only could, but did commit sin, even gross, outward sin. They did transgress the plain, known laws of God, speaking or acting what they knew he had forbidden.

4. Thus *David* was unquestionably born of God, or ever he was anointed King over Israel. He knew in whom he had believed; he was strong in faith, giving glory to God. * "The Lord, saith he, is my Shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in green pastures, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." He was filled with love; such as often constrained him to cry out, † "I will love thee, O Lord my God: the Lord is my stony Rock, and my Defence: the Horn also of my salvation, and my Refuge." He was a man of prayer, pouring out his soul before God, in all circumstances of life: and abundant in praises and thanksgiving; ‖ "Thy praise, saith he, shall be ever in my mouth. § "Thou art my God, and I will thank thee; thou art my God and I will praise thee." And yet such a child of God could and did commit sin; yea, the horrid sins of adultery and murder.

5. And even after the Holy Spirit was more largely given, after "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel," we want not instances of the same melancholy kind, which were also doubtless written for our instruction. Thus he who (probably from his *selling* all that he had, and *bringing the price* for the relief of his poor

* Psalm xxiii. 1, &c. † Psalm xviii. 1, 2. ‖ Psalm xxxiv. 1.

§ Psalm cxviii. 28. ¶ Acts iv. 36, 37.

brethren) was by the Apostles themselves surnamed *Barnabas*, that is, *the Son of Consolation*; who was so honoured at Antioch, as to be selected with Paul out of all the disciples, to carry their * relief unto the brethren in Judea: this Barnabas, who at his return from Judea, was by the peculiar direction of the Holy Ghost, solemnly † “separated from the other Prophets and Teachers, for the work whereunto God had called him,” even to accompany the great Apostle among the Gentiles, and to be his fellow-labourer in every place; nevertheless was afterwards so ‖ sharp in his contention with St. Paul (because he thought it not good to take with them John, in his visiting the brethren, a second time, who had departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work) that he himself also departed from the work: that he took John, and sailed unto Cyprus; forsaking him to whom he had been in so immediate a manner joined by the Holy Ghost.

6. An instance more astonishing than both these is given by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. When Peter, the aged, the zealous, the first of the Apostles; one of the three most highly favoured by his Lord; “was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles,” the Heathens converted to the Christian Faith, as having been peculiarly taught of God, that § he “should not call any man common or unclean.” But ¶ “when they were come, he separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after

* Acts xi. 29. † Chap. xiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. ‖ Chap. xv. 35, 39. § Acts xi 28. ¶ Gal. ii. 11, &c.

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the manner of the Gentiles," not regarding the ceremonial law of Moses, "why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Here is also plain, undeniable sin committed by one who was undoubtedly *born of God*. But how can this be reconciled with the assertion of St. John, if taken in the obvious literal meaning, That "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin?"

7. I answer, what has been long observed is this: So long as "he that is born of God keepeth himself (which he is able to do, by the grace of God) the wicked one toucheth him not." But if he keepeth not himself, if he abide not in the faith, he may commit sin even as another man.

It is easy therefore to understand, how any of these children of God might be moved from his own steadfastness, and yet the great truth of God, declared by the Apostle, remain steadfast and unshaken. He did not *keep himself*, by that grace of God which was sufficient for him. He fell, step by step, first, into negative, inward sin, not *stirring up the gift of God* which was in him, not "watching unto prayer, not pressing on to the mark of the prize of his high calling:" then into positive inward sin, inclining to wickedness with his heart, giving way to some evil desire or temper. Next, he lost his faith, his sight of a pardoning God, and consequently his love of God. And being then weak and like another man, he was capable of committing even outward sin.

8. To explain this by a particular instance: David was born of God, and saw God by faith. He loved God in sincerity. He could truly say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth (neither person nor thing) that I desire in comparison of thee?" But still there remained in his heart that corruption of nature, which is the seed of all evil.

He was * "walking upon the roof of his house,"

* 2 Sam. xi. 2.

probably praising the God whom his soul loved, when he looked down and saw Bathsheba. He felt a temptation, a thought which tended to evil. The Spirit of God did not fail to convince him of this. He doubtless heard and knew the warning voice. But he yielded in some measure to the thought, and the temptation began to prevail over him. Hereby his spirit was sullied; he saw God still; but it was more dimly than before. He loved God still; but not in the same degree, not with the same strength and ardor of affection. Yet God checked him again, though his Spirit was grieved; and his voice, though fainter and fainter, still whispered, "Sin lieth at the door; look unto me, and be thou saved." But he would not hear. He looked again, not unto God, but unto the forbidden object, till nature was superior to grace, and kindled lust in his soul.

The eye of his mind was now closed again, and God vanished out of his sight. Faith, the divine, supernatural intercourse with God, and the love of God ceased together. He then rushed on as a horse into the battle, and knowingly committed the outward sin.

9. You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin. Thus it goes on, from step to step, 1. The divine seed of loving, conquering faith, remains in him that is *born of God*. *He keepeth himself*, by the grace of God, and *cannot commit sin*. 2. A temptation arises; whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not. 3. The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him more abundantly watch unto prayer. 4. He gives way in some degree to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him. 5. The holy Spirit is grieved; his faith is weakened, and his love of God grows cold. 6. The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and faith, "This is the way; walk thou in it." 7. He turns away from the painful voice of God, and listens to the
pleasing

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pleasing voice of the tempter, 8. Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away. He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.

10. To explain this by another instance: The Apostle Peter was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; and hereby keeping himself, he had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

Walking thus in simplicity and godly sincerity, "before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles," knowing that what God had cleansed, was not common or unclean.

But *when they were come*, a temptation arose in his heart, *to fear those of the circumcision*, (the Jewish converts, who were zealous for circumcision and the other rites of the Mosaic law) and regard the favour and praise of these men, more than the praise of God.

He was warned by the Spirit that sin was near. Nevertheless he yielded to it in some degree, even to sinful fear of man, and his faith and love were proportionably weakened.

God reproved him again for giving place to the devil. Yet he would not hearken to the voice of his Shepherd; but gave himself up to that slavish fear, and thereby quenched the Spirit.

Then God disappeared, and faith and love being extinct, he committed the outward sin; *Walking not uprightly, not according to the truth of the gospel*, he *separated himself* from his Christian brethren, and by his evil example, if not advice also, *compelled even the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews*; to entangle themselves again with that yoke of bondage, from which *Christ had set them free*.

Thus it is unquestionably true, that he who is born of God, keeping himself, doth not, cannot:

commit sin; and yet, if he keepeth not himself, he may commit all manner of sin with greediness.

III. 1. From the preceding Considerations we may learn, first, To give a clear and uncontestable answer, to a question which has frequently perplexed many, who were sincere of heart. Does sin precede or follow the loss of faith? "Does a child of God first commit sin, and thereby lose his faith? Or does he lose his faith first, before he can commit sin?"

I answer, some sin of omission at least, must necessarily precede the loss of faith: some inward sin. But the loss of faith must precede the committing outward sin.

The more any believer examines his own heart, the more will he be convinced of this: that *faith working by love*, excludes both inward and outward sin from a soul *watching unto prayer*: that nevertheless we are even then liable to temptation, particularly to the sin that did easily beset us: that if the loving eye of the soul be steadily fixed on God, the temptation soon vanishes away: but if not, if we are * *ἐξελκόμενοι*, (as the Apostle James speaks, *drawn out* of God by our *own desire*, and *διεσπόμενοι*, *caught by the bait* of present or promised pleasures: then that *desire conceived* in us, *brings forth sin*; and having by that inward sin destroyed our faith, it casts us headlong into the snare of the devil, so that we may commit any outward sin whatever.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, secondly, What the life of God in the soul of a believer is; wherein it properly consists; and what is immediately and necessarily implied therein. It immediately and necessarily implies, the continual inspiration of God's holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God: a continual action of God upon the soul, and a reaction of the soul upon God:

* James i. 14.

an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.

3. And hence we may, thirdly, infer, the absolute necessity of this reaction of the soul (whatsoever it be called) in order to the continuance of the divine life therein. For it plainly appears, God does not continue to act upon the soul, unless the soul reacts upon God. He prevents us indeed with the blessings of his goodness. He first loves us, and manifests himself unto us. While we are yet afar, he calls us to himself, and shines upon our hearts. But if we do not then love him who first loved us, if we will not hearken to his voice; if we turn our eye away from him, and will not attend to the light which he pours in upon us; his Spirit will not always strive; he will gradually withdraw, and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts. He will not continue to breathe into our soul, unless our soul breathes toward him again; unless our love, and prayer, and thanksgiving return to him, a sacrifice wherewith he is well pleased.

4. Let us learn, lastly, to follow that direction of the great Apostle, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Let us fear sin, more than death or hell. Let us have a jealous (though not painful) fear, lest we should lean to our own deceitful hearts. "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." Even he who now standeth fast in the grace of God, in the *faith* that *overcometh the world*, may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and thereby "make shipwreck of his faith." And how easily then will outward sin regain its dominion over him? Thou therefore, O man of God, watch always; that thou mayest pray without ceasing, at all times and in all places, pouring out thy heart before him. So shalt thou always believe, and always love, and never commit sin.

S E R M O N XX.

The First DISCOURSE upon our LORD'S Sermon on the Mount.

MATTHEW V. 1, 2, 3, 4.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

"And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

1. **O**UR Lord had now * "gone about all Galilee," beginning at the time † "when John was cast into prison," not only "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom," but likewise "healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people." It was a natural consequence of this, that § "there followed him great multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the region beyond Jordan. ¶ And seeing the multitudes," whom no synagogue could contain, even had there been any at hand, "he went up into a mountain," where there was room for all, that came unto him from every quarter. "And when he was set," as the manner of the Jews was, "his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth" (an expression denoting the beginning of a solemn discourse) "and taught them, saying."—

* Matt. iv. 23. † Ver. 12. § Ver. 25. ¶ Matt. v. 1, &c.

2. Let

2. Let us observe, who it is, that is here speaking, that we may *take heed how we hear*. It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, who as such, has a right to dispose of all his creatures; the Lord our Governor, whose kingdom is from everlasting, and ruleth over all; the great Law-giver, who can well enforce all his laws, being "able to save and to destroy;" yea, to punish with everlasting destruction from his presence and from the glory of his power. It is the eternal wisdom of the Father, who knoweth whereof we are made, and understands our inmost frame; who knows how we stand related to God, to one another, to every creature which God hath made; and consequently how to adapt every law he prescribes, to all the circumstances wherein he hath placed us. It is he who is "loving unto every man, whose mercy is over all his works:" the God of love, who having emptied himself of his eternal glory, is come forth from his Father, to declare his will to the children of men, and then goeth again to the Father: who is sent of God "to open the eyes of the blind, to give light to them that sit in darkness:" it is the great Prophet of the Lord, concerning whom God had solemnly declared long ago, * "Whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Or, as the Apostle expresses it, † "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

3. And what is it which he is teaching? The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here shewing us the way to heaven, to the place which he hath prepared for us, the glory he had before the world began. He is teaching us the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom. And the only true way; for there is none besides: all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the Speaker we are well as-

* Deut. xviii. 19, † Acts iii. 23.

fured, that he hath declared the full and perfect will of God. He hath uttered not one tittle too much; nothing more than he had received of the Father. Nor too little; he hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Much less hath he uttered any thing wrong, any thing contrary to the will of him that sent him. All his words are true and right, concerning all things, and shall stand fast for ever and ever.

And we may easily remark, That in explaining and confirming these faithful and true sayings, he takes care to refute not only the mistakes of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* which then were, the false comments whereby the Jewish Teachers of that age had perverted the word of God; but all the practical mistakes, that are inconsistent with salvation, which should ever arise in the Christian Church: all the comments whereby the Christian Teachers (so called) of any age or nation, should pervert the word of God, and teach unwary souls, to seek death in the error of their life.

4. And hence we are naturally led to observe, whom it is that he is here teaching? Not the Apostles alone; if so, he had no need to have gone *up into the mountain*. A room in the house of *Matthew*, or any of his disciples, would have contained the twelve. Nor does it in any wise appear, that the disciples who *came unto him* were the twelve only. *Οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ*, without any force put upon the expression, may be understood, of all who desired to *learn of him*. But to put this out of all question, to make it undeniably plain that where it is said, *He opened his mouth and taught them*, the word *them* includes all the multitudes, who went up with him into the mountain, we need only observe the concluding verses of the seventh chapter. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the multitudes, οἱ ὄχλοι, were astonished at his doctrine (or teaching.) For he taught them* (the

(the multitudes) as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

Nor was it only those multitudes who were with him on the mount, to whom he now taught the way of salvation: but all the children of men, the whole race of mankind, the children that were yet unborn; all the generations to come even to the end of the world, who should ever hear the words of this life.

5. And this all men allow, with regard to some parts of the ensuing discourse. No man, for instance, denies, that what is said of *poverty of spirit*, relates to all mankind. But many have supposed, that other parts concerned only the Apostles, or the first Christians, or the Ministers of Christ: and were never designed for the generality of men, who consequently, have nothing at all to do with them.

But may we not justly enquire, who told them this? That some parts of this discourse, concerned only the Apostles? Or the Christians of the Apostolic age? Or the Ministers of Christ? Bare assertions are not a sufficient proof, to establish a point of so great importance. Has then our Lord himself taught us, that some parts of his discourse, do not concern all mankind? Without doubt, had it been so, he would have told us; he could not have omitted so necessary an information. But has he told us so? Where? In the discourse itself? No: here is not the least intimation of it. Has he said so elsewhere? In any other of his discourses? Not one word so much as glancing this way, can we find in any thing he ever spoke, either to the multitudes or to his disciples. Has any of the Apostles, or other inspired Writers, left such an instruction upon record? No such thing. No assertion of this kind is to be found in all the Oracles of God. Who then are the men who are so much wiser than God? Wise, so far above that is written?

6. Perhaps

6. Perhaps they will say, "That the reason of the thing requires such a restriction to be made." If it does, it must be on one of these two accounts; because without such a restriction, the discourse would either be apparently absurd, or would contradict some other Scripture. But this is not the case. It will plainly appear, when we come to examine the several particulars, that there is no absurdity at all in applying all which our Lord hath here delivered, to all mankind. Neither will it infer any contradiction to any thing else he has delivered, nor to any other Scripture whatever. Nay, it will farther appear, that either all the parts of this discourse are to be applied to men in general; or no part; seeing they are all connected together, all joined as the stones in an arch, of which you cannot take one away, without destroying the whole fabric.

7. We may, lastly, observe, How our Lord teaches here. And surely, as at all times, so particularly at this he speaks, *as never man spake*. Not as the holy men of old; although they also spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Not as *Peter* or *James*, or *John* or *Paul*. They were indeed wise master-builders in his Church. But still in this, in the degrees of heavenly wisdom, the servant is not as his Lord. No, nor even as himself, at any other time, or on any other occasion. It does not appear, that it was ever his design, at any other time or place, to lay down at once the whole plan of his Religion, to give us a full prospect of Christianity, to describe at large the nature of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Particular branches of this he has indeed described, on a thousand different occasions. But never besides here, did he give, of set purpose, a general view of the whole. Nay, we have nothing else of this kind in all the Bible: unless one should except that short sketch of Holiness, delivered by God in those ten words or commandments, to *Moses*,

on *Mount Sinai*. But even here how wide a difference is there between one and the other? "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth," 2 Cor. iii. 10.

8. Above all, with what amazing love does the Son of God, here reveal his Father's will to man! He does not bring us again "to the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest." He does not speak as when he "thundered out of heaven; when the Highest gave his thunder, hail-stones and coals of fire." He now addresses us with his still, small voice, *Blessed or happy are the poor in spirit*. Happy are the mourners; the meek; those that hunger after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; happy in the end and in the way; happy in this life, and in life everlasting! As if he had said, Who is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Behold, I shew you the thing which your soul longeth for; see the way you have so long sought in vain! The way of pleasantness; the path to calm, joyous peace, to heaven below and heaven above!

9. At the same time with what authority does he teach! Well might they say, *Not as the Scribes*. Observe the manner, (but it cannot be expressed in words) the air, with which he speaks! Not as *Moses*, the servant of God: not as *Abraham*, his friend: not as any of the Prophets: nor as any of the sons of men. It is something more than human; more than can agree to any created being. It speaks the Creator of all, a God, a God appears! Yea, *ô ôv*, the Being of beings, JEHOVAH, the Self-existent, the Supreme, the God who is over all, blessed for ever!

10. This divine discourse, delivered in the most excellent method, every subsequent part illustrating those that precede, is commonly, and not improperly divided, into three principal branches; the

first, contained in the fifth, the second in the sixth, and the third in the seventh chapter. In the first, the sum of all true Religion is laid down in eight particulars, which are explained and guarded against the false glosses of man, in the following parts of the fifth chapter. In the second are rules for that right intention, which we are to preserve in all our outward actions; unmixed with worldly desires, or anxious cares for even the necessities of life. In the third, are cautions against the main hindrances of religion, closed with an application of the whole.

I. 1. Our Lord, first, lays down the sum of all true Religion in eight particulars, which he explains and guards against the false glosses of men to the end of the fifth chapter.

Some have supposed that he designed in these, to point out the several stages of the Christian course; the steps which a Christian successively takes in his journey to the promised land: others, that all the particulars here set down, belong at all times to every Christian: and why may we not allow both the one and the other? What inconsistency is there between them? It is undoubtedly true, that both *poverty of spirit* and every other temper which is here mentioned, are at all times found, in a greater or less degree, in every real Christian. And it is equally true, that real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit, and goes on in the order here set down, till the *man of God* is made *perfect*. We begin at the lowest of these gifts of God; yet so as not to relinquish this, when we are called of God, to come up higher: but “whereunto we have already attained, we hold fast,” while we *press on* to what is yet *before*, to the highest blessings of God in Christ Jesus.

2. The foundation of all is *poverty of spirit*: here therefore our Lord begins: “Blessed, saith he, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

It

It may not improbably be supposed, that our Lord, looking on those who were round about him, and observing that not many rich were there, but rather the poor of the world, took occasion from thence, to make a transition from temporal to spiritual things. *Blessed*, saith he (or *happy*; so the word should be rendered, both in this and the following verses) *are the poor in spirit*. He does not say, they that are *poor*, as to *outward circumstances*; it being not impossible, that some of these may be as far from happiness as a monarch upon his throne; but *the poor in spirit*, they who, whatever their outward circumstances are, have that disposition of heart, which is the first step to all real, substantial happiness, either in this world or that which is to come.

3. Some have judged, That by the *poor in spirit* here, are meant, those who love poverty; those who are free from covetousness; from the love of money; who fear, rather than desire riches. Perhaps they have been induced so to judge, by wholly confining their thoughts to the very term; or by considering the weighty observation of St. Paul, "That the love of money is the root of all evil." And hence many have wholly divested themselves, not only of riches, but of all worldly goods. Hence also the vows of voluntary poverty, seem to have arisen in the Romish Church: it being supposed, that so eminent a degree of this fundamental grace, must be a large step toward *the kingdom of heaven*.

But these do not seem to have observed, first, That the expression of St. Paul must be understood with some restriction. Otherwise it is not true: for the love of money is not *the root*, the sole root of *all evil*. There are a thousand other roots of evil in this world, as sad experience daily shews. His meaning can only be, it is the root of very many evils; perhaps of more than any single vice besides; secondly, That this sense of the ex-

pression *poor in spirit*, will by no means suit our Lord's present design, which is to lay a general foundation whereon the whole fabric of Christianity may be built: a design which would in no wise be answered, by guarding against one particular vice: so that, if even this were supposed to be one part of his meaning, it could not possibly be the whole: thirdly, that it cannot be supposed to be any part of his meaning, unless we charge him with manifest tautology: seeing if *poverty of spirit* were only freedom from covetousness, from the love of money, or the desire of riches, it would coincide with what he afterwards mentions, it would be only a branch of *purity of heart*.

4. Who then are "the poor in spirit?" Without question, the humble; they who know themselves: who are convinced of sin: those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ.

One of these can no longer say, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing:" as now knowing, that he is "wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." He is convinced that he is spiritually poor indeed; having no spiritual good abiding in him. *In me*, saith he, *dwelleth no good thing*; but whatsoever is evil and abominable. He has a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother's womb, which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof. He sees more and more of the evil tempers, which spring from that evil root: the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honour that cometh from men: the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice, or bitterness; the inbred enmity both against God and man, which appears in ten thousand shapes: the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires,

fires, which cleave to his inmost soul. He is conscious, how deeply he has offended by his tongue; if not by profane, immodest, untrue or unkind words, yet by discourse which was not *good, to the use of edifying, nor meet to minister grace to the hearers*: which consequently was all *corrupt* in God's account, and grievous to his holy Spirit. His evil works are now likewise ever in his sight; if he tell them, "they are more than he is able to express." He may as well think to number the "drops of rain, the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity."

5. His guilt is now also before his face: he knows the punishment he has deserved, were it only on account of his *carnal mind*, the entire, universal corruption of his nature: how much more, on account of all his evil desires and thoughts, of all his sinful words and actions? He cannot doubt for a moment, but the least of these deserves the damnation of hell; "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched." Above all, the guilt of "not believing on the name of the only begotten Son of God," lies heavy upon him. *How, saith he, shall I escape, who "neglect so great salvation!"* He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

6. But what shall he give in exchange for his soul, which is forfeited to the just vengeance of God? "Wherewithal shall he come before the Lord?" How shall he pay him that he oweth? Were he from this moment to perform the most perfect obedience to every command of God, this would make no amends for a single sin, for any one act of past disobedience: seeing he owes God all the service he is able to perform from this moment to all eternity, could he pay this, it would make no manner of amends, for what he ought to have done before. He sees himself therefore utterly helpless, with regard to atoning for his past sins.

utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.

But if God would forgive him all that is past, on this one condition, that he should sin no more, that for the time to come he should entirely and constantly obey all his commands: he well knows that this would profit him nothing, being a condition he could never perform. He knows and feels, that he is not able to obey, even the outward commands of God: seeing these cannot be obeyed, while his heart remains in its natural sinfulness and corruption: inasmuch as an evil tree, cannot bring forth good fruit. But he cannot cleanse a sinful heart: with men this is impossible. So that he is utterly at a loss, even how to begin walking in the path of God's commandments. He knows not how to get one step forward in the way. Encompassed with sin and sorrow and fear, and finding no way to escape, he can only cry out, "Lord save, or I perish!"

7. *Poverty of spirit* then, as it implies the first step we take in running the race which is set before us, is, a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness. This some have monstrously stiled, "The virtue of humility;" thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation. But our Lord's expression is quite of another kind; conveying no idea to the hearer, but that of mere want, of naked sin, of helpless guilt and misery.

8. The great Apostle, where he endeavours to bring sinners to God, speaks in a manner just answerable to this. * "The wrath of God, saith he, is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:" a change which he immediately fixes on the Heathen world, and thereby proves they were under the wrath of God. He next shews, that the Jews were no better than they, and were therefore under the same condemnation: and all this not in order to their attaining "The

* Rom. i. 18, &c.

noble virtue of humility," but "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

He proceeds to shew, that they were helpless as well as guilty; which is the plain purport of all those expressions, "Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified—But now the righteousness of God, which is by faith, of Jesus Christ, without the law is manifested—We conclude, That a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law:" expressions all tending to the same point, even to *hide pride from man*: to humble him to the dust, without teaching him to reflect upon his humility as a virtue; to inspire him with that full piercing conviction of his utter sinfulness, guilt and helplessness, which casts the sinner, stript of all, lost and undone, on his strong helper, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

9. One cannot but observe here, that Christianity begins, just where Heathen morality ends: "poverty of spirit, conviction of sin, the renouncing ourselves, the not having our own righteousness," the very first point in the religion of Jesus Christ, leaving all Pagan religion behind. This was ever hid from the wise men of this world: insomuch that the whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for *humility*: (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning:) no, nor was one found in all the copious language of Greece, till it was *made* by the great Apostle.

10. O that we may feel what they were not able to express! Sinner, awake! Know thyself! Know and feel, that thou wert *shapen in wickedness, and that in sin did thy mother conceive thee*, and that thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Sink under the mighty hand of God, as guilty of death eternal: and cast off, renounce, abhor all imagination,

tion, of ever being able to help thyself! Be it all thy hope to be washed in his blood, and renewed by his almighty Spirit, "who himself bore all our sins in his own body on the tree." So shalt thou witness, "Happy are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

11. This is that *kingdom of heaven, of God, or which is within us*, even "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." And what is righteousness, but the life of God in the soul: the mind which was in Christ Jesus: the image of God stamp'd upon the heart, now renewed after the likeness of him that created it? What is it but the love of God because he first loved us, and the love of all mankind, for his sake?

And what is this peace, the peace of God, but that calm serenity of soul, that sweet repose in the blood of Jesus, which leaves no doubt of our acceptance in him? Which excludes all fear, but the loving, filial fear of offending our Father which is in heaven.

This inward kingdom implies also *joy in the Holy Ghost*, who seals upon our hearts, *the redemption which is in Jesus*, the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, "for the remission of the sins that are past:" who giveth us now the *earnest of our inheritance* of the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give in that day. And well may this be termed, "The kingdom of heaven;" seeing it is heaven already opened in the soul; the first springing up of those rivers of pleasure, which flow at God's right hand for evermore.

12. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Who-soever thou art, to whom God hath given to be *poor in spirit*, to feel thyself lost, thou hast a right thereto, through the gracious promise of him who cannot lie. It is purchased for thee by the blood of the Lamb. It is very nigh: thou art on the brink of heaven. Another step, and thou enterest into the kingdom, of righteousness and peace and joy.

joy. Art thou all sin? "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world?" All unholy? See thy "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Art thou unable to atone for the least of thy sins? *He is the propitiation for all thy sins.* Now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all thy sins shall be blotted out. Art thou totally unclean in soul and body? Here is the *fountain for sin and uncleanness.* "Arise and wash away thy sins:" stagger no more at the promise through unbelief. Give glory to God: dare to believe! Now cry out from the ground of thy heart,

Yes, I yield, I yield at last,
 Listen to thy speaking blood;
 Me with all my sins I cast
 On my atoning God!

13. Then thou learnest of him to be *lowly of heart.* And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. *Poverty of spirit*, in this meaning of the word, begins, where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is, a continual sense of our total dependance on him, for every good thought or word or work; of our utter inability to all good, unless he *water us every moment*: and an abhorrence of the praise of men, knowing that all praise is due unto God only. With this is joined a loving shame, a tender humiliation before God, even for sins which we know he hath forgiven us, and for the sin which still remaineth in our hearts, although we know it is not imputed to our condemnation. Nevertheless the conviction we feel of inbred sin, is deeper and deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see, of the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, (as great a mystery as this may appear, to those

those who know not the power of God unto salvation) the more do we discern of our alienation from God; of the enmity that is in our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

II. 1. It is true, he has scarce any conception of this, who now begins to know the inward kingdom of heaven. "In his prosperity he said, I shall never be moved; thou, Lord hast made my hill so strong." Sin is utterly bruised beneath his feet, that he can scarce believe it remaineth in him. Even temptation is silenced and speaks not again: it cannot approach, but stands afar off. He is borne aloft in the chariots of joy and love: he soars *as upon the wings of an eagle*. But our Lord well knew, that this triumphant state does not often continue long. He therefore presently subjoins, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

2. Not that we can imagine this promise belongs to those, who mourn only on some worldly account: who are in sorrow and heaviness, merely on account of some worldly trouble or disappointment: such as the loss of their reputation, or friends; or the impairing of their fortune. As little title to it have they who are afflicting themselves, through fear of some temporal evil: or who pine away with anxious care, or that desire of earthly things which *maketh the heart sick*. Let us not think, these *shall receive any thing from the Lord*: he is not in all their thoughts. Therefore it is that they thus "walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain." "And this shall ye have of mine hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

3. The mourners of whom our Lord here speaks, are those that mourn on quite another account: they that mourn after God, after him in whom they did *rejoice with joy unspeakable*, when he gave them to *taste the good*, the pardoning "word, and the

the powers of the world to come." But he now *hides his face and they are troubled*; they cannot see him through the dark cloud. But they see temptation and sin, which they fondly supposed were gone never to return, arising again, following after them again, and holding them in on every side. It is not strange if their soul is now disquieted within them, and trouble and heaviness take hold upon them. Nor will their great enemy fail to improve the occasion; to ask, "Where is now thy God? Where is now the blessedness whereof thou spakest? The beginning of the kingdom of heaven? Yea, hath God said, Thy sins are forgiven thee? Surely God hath not said it. It was only a dream, a mere delusion, a creature of thy own imagination. If thy sins are forgiven why art thou thus? Can a pardoned sinner be thus unholy?"—And if then, instead of immediately crying to God, they reason with him that is wiser than they, they will be in heaviness indeed, in sorrow of heart, in anguish not to be expressed. Nay even when God shines again upon the soul, and takes away all doubt of his past mercy, still he that is *weak in faith* may be tempted and troubled, on account of what is to come: especially, when inward sin revives, and thrusts sore at him that he may fall. Then may he again cry out,

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!"

lest I should make shipwreck of the faith, and my last estate be worse than the first:

"Lest all my bread of life should fail,
And I sink down unchang'd to hell."

4. Sure it is that this affliction "for the present is not joyous but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it bringeth forth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby." *Blessed* therefore are they that thus *mourn*, if they *tarry the Lord's leisure*, and suffer not themselves to be turned out of the

the way, by the miserable comforters of the world; if they resolutely reject all the comforts of sin, of folly and vanity; all the idle diversions and amusements of the world, all the pleasures which *perish in the using*, and which only tend to benumb and stupify the soul, that it may neither be sensible of itself nor God. Blessed are they who *follow on to know the Lord*, and steadily refuse all other comfort. They shall be comforted by the consolations of his Spirit, by a fresh manifestation of his love; by such a witness of his accepting them in the Beloved, as shall never more be taken away from them. This *full assurance of faith* swallows up all doubt, as well as all tormenting fear; God now giving them a sure hope of an enduring substance and *strong consolation through grace*. Without disputing, whether it be possible for any of those to *fall away, who were once enlightened and made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, it suffices them to say, by the power now resting upon them, * “Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height nor depth—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

5. This whole process, both of mourning for an absent God, and recovering the joy of his countenance, seems to be shadowed out in what our Lord spoke to his Apostles, the night before his passion, § “Do ye enquire of that I said, a little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me? Verily verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament,” namely when ye do not see me; “but the world shall rejoice,” shall triumph over you, as though your hope were now come to an end. “And ye shall be sorrowful,” through doubt, through fear, through temptation, through vehement desire: “but your sorrow shall be turned into joy,” by the return of him whom

* Rom. viii. 35—38, 39. § John xvi. 19—22.

your soul loveth. "A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now have sorrow : " ye mourn and cannot be comforted. "But I will see you again: and your heart shall rejoice, [with calm, inward joy,] and your joy no man taketh from you."

6. But although this mourning is at an end, is lost in holy joy, by the return of the Comforter, yet is there another, and a blessed mourning it is, which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: they *weep with them that weep*. They weep for them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those, that are in some measure saved from their sins. "Who is weak and they are not weak? Who is offended and they burn not?" They are grieved for the dishonour continually done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. At all times they have an awful sense of this, which brings a deep seriousness upon their spirits: a seriousness which is not a little increased, since the eyes of their understanding were opened, by their continually seeing the vast ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore, which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. They see here, the house of God eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering; and thence feel the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever.

7. But all this wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. The whole affair of *mourning* and *poverty of spirit*, is with them stupidity and dulness. Nay it is well if they pass so favourable a judgment upon it; if they do not vote it to be mere moping and melancholy, if not downright lunacy and dis-

traction. And it is no wonder at all, that this judgment should be passed, by those who know not God. Suppose as two persons were walking together, one should suddenly stop, and with the strongest signs of fear and amazement, cry out, "On what a precipice do we stand! See, we are on the point of being dashed in pieces! Another step, and we fall into that huge abyfs. Stop! I will not go on for all the world." When the other, who seemed to himself at least equally sharp-sighted, looked forward and saw nothing of all this; what would he think of his companion? But that he was *beside himself*; that his head was out of order: that much religion (if he was not guilty of much learning) had certainly *made him mad*.

8. But let not the children of God, *the mourners in Sion*, be moved by any of these things. Ye whose eyes are enlightened, be not troubled by those, who walk on still in darkness. Ye do not walk on in a vain shadow: God and eternity are real things. Heaven and hell are in very deed open before you: and ye are on the edge of the great gulph. It has already swallowed up more than words can express, nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, and still yawns to devour, whether they see it or no, the giddy, miserable children of men. O cry aloud! Spare not! Lift up your voice, to him who grasps both time and eternity, both for yourselves and your brethren, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the destruction that cometh as a whirlwind! That ye may be brought safe, through all the waves and storms, into the haven where you would be. Weep for yourselves, till he wipes away the tears from your eyes. And even then weep for the miseries that come upon the earth, till the Lord of all shall put a period to misery and sin, shall wipe away the tears from all faces, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

S E R M O N XXI.

DISCOURSE the SECOND, on our LORD's
SERMON on the MOUNT.

MATTHEW V. 5, 6, 7.

- " Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth.
" Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.
" Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy."

1. **W**HEN " the winter is past, when the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land ; " when he that comforts the mourners is now returned, *that he may abide with them for ever* : when at the brightness of his presence the clouds disperse, the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty, the storms of fear flee away, the waves of sorrow subside, and their spirit again *rejoiceth in God their Saviour* : then is it that this word is eminently fulfilled, then those whom he hath comforted can bear witness, *Blessed, or happy, are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth.*

2. But who are the meek ? Not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing ; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life, by a stupid insensibility ; who have, either by nature or art, the virtue of stocks and stones, and resent nothing, because they feel nothing. Brute philosophers are wholly unconcerned in this matter. Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity. So that one would not easily conceive, how any Christians of

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the purer ages, especially any of the Fathers of the Church, could confound these, and mistake one of the foulest errors of heathenism, for a branch of true Christianity.

3. Nor does Christian meekness imply, the being without zeal for God, any more than it does ignorance or insensibility. No; it keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or defect. It does not destroy but balance the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations. It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear: preserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right-hand or the left.

4. Meekness therefore seems properly to relate to ourselves. But it may be referred either to God or our neighbour. When this due composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed resignation; a calm acquiescence in whatsoever is his will concerning us, even though it may not be pleasing to nature; saying continually, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." When we consider it more strictly with regard to ourselves, we stile it patience or contentedness. When it is exerted toward other men, then it is mildness to the good, and gentleness to the evil.

5. They who are truly meek, can clearly discern what is evil: and they can only suffer it. They are *sensible* of every thing of this kind, but still meekness holds the reins. They are exceeding *zealous for the Lord of hosts*; but their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered in every thought, and word, and work, with the love of man as well as the love of God. They do not desire to extinguish any of the passions, which God has for wise ends implanted in their nature. But they have the mastery of all; they hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in subservience

to those ends. And thus even the harsher and more unpleasing passions, are applicable to the noblest purposes. Even hatred, and anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

6. It is evident, this divine temper, is not only to abide, but to increase in us day by day. Occasions of exercising, and thereby increasing it, will never be wanting while we remain upon earth. "We have need of patience, that after we have done [and suffered] the will of God, we may receive the promise." We have need of resignation, that we may in all circumstances say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." And we have need of *gentleness towards all men*; but especially toward the evil and unthankful: otherwise we shall be overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good.

7. Nor does meekness restrain only the outward act, as the Scribes and Pharisees taught of old, and the miserable Teachers, who are not taught of God, will not fail to do in all ages. Our Lord guards us against this, and shews the true extent of it, in the following words: "Ye have heard, that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment," ver. 21, &c.

"But I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."

8. Our Lord here ranks under the head of murder, even that anger which goes no farther than the heart; which does not show itself by any outward unkindness; no, not so much as a passionate word.

Whosoever is angry with his brother, with any man living, seeing we are all brethren, whosoever feels any unkindness in his heart, any temper contrary to love: whosoever is angry *without a cause*, without a sufficient cause, or farther than that cause requires, *shall be in danger of the judgment*, ὁποῦς ἔσται *shall* in that moment be obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God.

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies, which omit the word, *ὡς*, *without a cause*? It is not entirely superfluous? For if *anger at persons* be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it? Any that will justify it in the sight of God?

Anger at sin we allow. In this sense we may be angry and yet we *sin not*. In this sense our Lord himself is once recorded to have been angry. "He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He was grieved at the sinners, and angry at the sin. And this is undoubtedly right before God.

9. *And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca*: whosoever shall give way to anger, so as to utter any contemptuous word. It is observed by Commentators, that *Raca* is a Syriac word, which properly signifies, *empty, vain, foolish*: so that it is as inoffensive an expression as can well be used, toward one at whom we are displeased. And yet whosoever shall use this, as our Lord assures us, *shall be in danger of the council*: rather, shall be obnoxious thereto: he shall be liable to a severer sentence from the Judge of all the earth.

But whosoever shall say, Thou fool—Whosoever shall so give place to the devil, as to break out into reviling, into designedly reproachful and contumelious language, *shall be obnoxious to hell-fire*, shall in that instant be liable to the highest condemnation. It should be observed, that our Lord describes all these, as obnoxious to capital punishment. The first, to strangling, usually inflicted on those who
were

were condemned in one of the inferior courts : the second, to stoning, which was frequently inflicted on those who were condemned by the great Council at *Jerusalem* ; the third, to burning alive, inflicted only on the highest offenders, in the *Valley of the sons of Hinnom*. *עֵי עֵינֵי* from which that word is evidently taken, which we translate hell.

10. And whereas men naturally imagine, that God will excuse their defect in some duties, for their exactness in others, our Lord next takes care to cut off that vain, though common imagination. He shews, That it is impossible for any sinner to commute with God : who will not accept one duty for another, nor take a part of obedience for the whole. He warns us, That the performing our duty to God, will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbour : that works of piety, as they are called, will be so far from commending us to God, if we are wanting in charity, that on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, on account of thy unkind behaviour toward him, of thy calling him, Raca, or Thou fool ; think not that thy gift will atone for thy anger ; or that it will find any acceptance with God, so long as thy conscience is defiled with the guilt of unrepented sin. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, (at least, do all that in thee lies toward being reconciled) and then come and offer thy gift, ver. 23, 24.

11. And let there be no delay in what so nearly concerneth thy soul. *Agree with thine adversary quickly—Now : upon the spot—while thou art in the way with him—if it be possible, before he go out of thy sight—Lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge—Lest he appeal to God, the Judge of all, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, to Satan, the executioner of the wrath of*
 God,

God, *and thou be cast into prison*, into hell, there to be reserved to the judgment of the great day. "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." But this it is impossible for thee ever to do; seeing thou hast nothing to pay. Therefore if thou art once in that prison, the smoke of thy torment must *ascend up for ever and ever*.

12. Mean time "the meek shall inherit the earth." Such is the foolishness of worldly wisdom! The wise of the world had warned them again and again, "That if they did not resent such treatment, if they would tamely suffer themselves to be thus abused, there would be no living for them upon earth; that they would never be able to procure the common necessities of life, nor to keep even what they had; that they could expect no peace, no quiet possession, no enjoyment of any thing." Most true—suppose there were no God in the world; or suppose he did not concern himself with the children of men. But "when God ariseth to judgment, and to help all the meek upon earth:" how doth he laugh all this heathen wisdom to scorn, and turn the "fierceness of man to his praise!" He takes a peculiar care, to provide them with all things needful for life and godliness. He secures to them the provision he hath made, in spite of the force, fraud, or malice of men. And what he secures, he *gives them richly to enjoy*. It is sweet to them, be it little or much. As *in patience they possess their souls*, so they truly possess whatever God hath given them. They are always content, always pleased with what they have. It pleases them, because it pleases God. So that while their heart, their desire, their joy is in heaven, they may truly be said to *inherit the earth*.

13. But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part *in the New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*, in that inheritance, a general description

scription of which (and the particulars we shall know hereafter) St. John hath given in the 20th chapter of the Revelation. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven—and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent—and bound him a thousand years—And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and of them which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were expired. This is the first resurrection: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

II. 1. Our Lord has hitherto been more immediately employed, in removing the hindrances of true Religion: such is pride, the first, grand hindrance of all Religion, which is taken away by *poverty of spirit*; levity, and thoughtlessness, which prevented any Religion from taking root in the soul, till they are removed by holy *mourning*: such are anger, impatience, discontent, which are all healed by Christian *meekness*. And when once these hindrances are removed, these evil diseases of the soul, which were continually raising false cravings therein, and filling it with sickly appetites, the native appetite of a heaven-born spirit returns; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness: and "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

2. Righteousness (as was observed before) is the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from, as well as terminating in the
love

love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men, for his sake.

3. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after this:* in order fully to understand which expression, we should observe, First, That hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. In like manner this hunger in the soul, this thirst after the image of God, is the strongest of all our spiritual appetites, when it is once awakened in the heart: yea, it swallows up all the rest in that one great desire, To be renewed after the likeness of him that created us. We should, Secondly, observe, That from the time we begin to hunger and thirst, those appetites do not cease but are more and more craving and importunate, till we either eat and drink or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ, these spiritual appetites do not cease, but cry after their food with more and more importunity. Nor can they possibly cease, before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining. We may, Thirdly, observe, That hunger and thirst are satisfied with nothing but meat and drink. If you would give to him that is hungry all the world beside, all the elegance of apparel, all the trappings of state, all the treasure upon earth, yea thousands of gold and silver: if you would pay him ever so much honour, he regards it not; all these things are then of no account with him. He would still say, These are not the things I want; give me food, or else I die. The very same is the case with every soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He can find no comfort in any thing but this; he can be satisfied with nothing else. Whatever you offer besides, it is lightly esteemed; whether it be riches, or honour, or pleasure, he still says, This is not the thing which I want. Give me love or else I die!

4. And

4. And it is as impossible to satisfy such a soul, a soul that is athirst for God, the living God, with what the world accounts Religion, as with what they account happiness. The Religion of the world implies three things; First, The doing no harm, the abstaining from outward sin; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness: Secondly, The doing good, the relieving the poor, the being charitable, as it is called: Thirdly, The using the means of grace; at least, the going to Church and to the Lord's Supper. He in whom these three marks are found, is termed by the world a religious man. But will this satisfy him who hungers after God? No. It is not food for his soul. He wants a Religion of a nobler kind, a Religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can *fill his belly with the East wind*. True, he is careful to abstain from the very appearance of evil: he is zealous of good works. He attends all the ordinances of God. But all this is not what it longs for. This is only the outside of that Religion, which he insatiably hungers after. The knowledge of God in *Christ Jesus, the life which is hid with Christ in God*, the being joined unto the Lord in one spirit, the fellowship with the Father and the Son: the walking in the light as God is in the light, the being purified even as he is pure: this is the Religion, the Righteousness he thirsts after. Nor can he rest, till he thus rests in God.

5. "Blessed are they who thus hunger and thirst after righteousness: For they shall be filled." They shall be filled with the things which they long for; even with righteousness and true holiness. God shall satisfy them with the blessings of his goodness, with the felicity of his chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of his love. He shall give them to drink of his pleasures as out of the river, which he that
drinketh

drinketh of, shall never thirst : only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.

The painful thirst, the fond desire

Thy joyous presence shall remove :

But my full soul shall still require

A whole eternity of love.

6. Whosoever then thou art, to whom God hath given to *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, cry unto him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift, that this divine appetite may never cease. If many rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not, yea, cry so much the more, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me !" "Let me not live, but to be holy as thou art, holy !" No more *spend thy money for that which is not bread*, nor thy *labour for that which satisfieth not*. Canst thou hope to dig happiness out of the earth ? To find it in the things of the world, O trample under foot all its pleasures, despise its honours, count its riches as dung and dross : yea, and all the things which are beneath the sun, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus ;" for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God, wherein it was originally created. Beware of quenching that blessed hunger and thirst, by what the world calls Religion : a Religion of form, of outside shew, which leaves the heart as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a Religion that is spirit and life ; the dwelling in God and God in thee, the being an inhabitant of eternity ; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling "within the veil, and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

III. 1. And the more they are filled with the life of God, the more tenderly will they be concerned for those who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Nor shall this
concern

concern for others lose its reward. "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

The word used by our Lord, more immediately implies, the compassionate, the tender-hearted: those, who far from despising, earnestly grieve for those that do not hunger after God. This eminent part of brotherly love, is here (by a common figure) put for the whole: so that *the merciful*, in the full sense of the term, are they who *love their neighbours as themselves*.

2. Because of the vast importance of this love, without which, "though we spake with the tongues of men and angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, though we had all faith so as to remove mountains; yea, though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing:" the wisdom of God has given us by the Apostle Paul, a full and particular account of it: by considering which we shall most clearly discern, who are the *merciful* that shall *obtain mercy*.

3. *Charity*, or love (as it were to be wished it had been rendered throughout, being a far plainer and less ambiguous word) the love of our neighbour as Christ hath loved us, *suffereth long*, is patient toward all men. It suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, infirmities, all the forwardness and littleness of faith, in the children of God; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world. And it suffers all this, not only for a time, for a short season, but to the end: still feeding our enemy when he hungers: if he thirst, still giving him drink: thus continually *heaping coals of fire*, of melting love, *upon his head*.

4. And in every step toward this desirable end, the *overcoming evil with good*, *Love is kind*: (*χρησάται* a word not easily translated) it is soft, mild, benign. It stands at the utmost distance from moroseness, from all harshness or soweriness of

spirit; and inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection.

5. Consequently, *Love envieth not*, it is impossible it should, it is directly opposite to that baneful temper. It cannot be, that he who has this tender affection to all, who earnestly wishes all temporal and spiritual blessings, all good things in this world and the world to come, to every soul that God hath made, should be pained at his bestowing any good gift, on any child of man. If he has himself received the same, he does not grieve, but rejoice that another partakes of the common benefit. If he has not, he blesses God that his brother at least has, and is herein happier than himself. And the greater his love, the more does he rejoice, in the blessings of all mankind: the farther is he removed from every kind and degree of envy toward any creature.

6. Love is *non suspexit*. *Vaunteth not itself*, which coincides with the very next words, but rather (as the word likewise properly imports) is *not rash* or *hasty* in judging. It will not hastily condemn any one. It does not pass a severe sentence, on a slight or sudden view of things. It first weighs all the evidence, particularly that which is brought in favour of the accused. A true lover of his neighbour, is not like the generality of men, who even in cases of the nicest nature, "see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion." No: he proceeds with wariness and circumspection, taking heed to every step: willingly subscribing to that rule of the ancient Heathen, (O where will the modern Christian appear!) "I am so far from lightly believing what one man says against another, that I will not easily believe what a man says against himself. I will always allow him second thoughts, and many times counsel too."

7. It follows, *Love is not puffed up*. It does not incline or suffer any man, "to think more highly

highly of himself than he ought to think :” but rather *to think soberly*. Yea, it humbles the soul unto the dust. It destroys all high conceits, engendering pride, and makes us rejoice to be as nothing, to be little and vile, the lowest of all, the servant of all. They who are *kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love*, cannot but in honour prefer one another. Those who *having the same love are of one accord*, do in lowliness of mind each esteem other better than themselves.

8. “ It doth not behave itself unseemly.” It is not rude, or willingly offensive to any. It *renders to all their due*; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour: courtesy, civility, humanity to all the world; in their several degrees *honouring all men*. A late Writer defines good-breeding, nay, the highest degree of it, Politeness, “ a continual desire to please, appearing in all the behaviour.” But if so, there is none so well-bred as a Christian, a lover of all mankind. For he cannot but desire to “ please all men for their good, to edification.” And these desires cannot be hid: it will necessarily appear in all his intercourse with man. For his *love is without dissimulation*; it will appear in all his actions and conversation: yea, and will constrain him, though without guile, to “ become all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.”

9. And in becoming all things to all men, *Love seeketh not her own*. In striving to please all men, the lover of mankind has no eye at all to his own temporal advantage. He covets no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel: he desires nothing but the salvation of their souls. Yea, in some sense he may be said, *not to seek his own* spiritual, any more than temporal advantage. For while he is on the full stretch to save their souls from death, he, as it were forgets himself. He does not think of himself so long as that zeal for the glory of God swallows him up. Nay, at some times, he may

almost seem, through an excess of love, to give up himself, both his soul and his body : while he cries out with *Moses*, * “ O ! this people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin. And if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written ! ” Or with *St. Paul*, † “ I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh ! ”

10. No marvel that such *Love is not provoked* : ἡ παροξύνεται. Let it be observed, the word *easily*, strangely inserted in the translation, is not in the original. *St. Paul's* words are absolute. *Love is not provoked* : it is not provoked to unkindness toward any one. Occasions indeed will frequently occur ; outward provocations of various kinds : but love does not yield to provocation. It triumphs over all. In all trials it looketh unto Jesus, and is more than conqueror in his love.

It is not improbable, that our Translators inserted that word, as it were to *excuse* the Apostle ; who, as they supposed, might otherwise appear to be wanting, in the very love which he so beautifully describes. They seem to have supposed this from a phrase in the Acts of the Apostles ; which is likewise very inaccurately translated. When *Paul* and *Barnabas* disagreed concerning *John*, the translation runs thus, || “ And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder.” This naturally induces the reader to suppose, that they were equally sharp therein : that *St. Paul*, who was undoubtedly right, with regard to the point in question (it being quite improper to take *John* with them again, who had deserted them before) was as much provoked as *Barnabas* who gave such a proof of his anger, as to leave *the work* for which he had been *set apart by the Holy Ghost*. But the original imports no such thing : nor does it affirm, that *St.*

* Exod. xxxii. 21, 22. † Rom. ix. 3. | Acts xv. 39.

Paul was provoked at all. It simply says καὶ ἰγνίλο παροξυσμός. *And there was a sharpness, a paroxysm of anger: in consequence of which Barnabas left St. Paul, took John and went his own way. Paul then chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God; (which is not said concerning Barnabas) and he went through Syria and Cilicia, as he had proposed, confirming the Churches. But to return.*

11. Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because *it thinketh no evil*. Indeed the merciful man cannot avoid knowing many things that are evil, he cannot but see them with his own eyes and hear them with his own ears. For love does not put out his eyes, so that it is impossible for him, not to see that such things are done. Neither does it take away his understanding, any more than his senses, so that he cannot but know that they are evil. For instance: when he sees a man strike his neighbour, or hears him blaspheme God, he cannot either question the thing done or the words spoken, or doubt of their being evil. Yet ἐλογίζεσθαι τὸ κακόν. The word λογίζεσθαι (*thinketh*) does not refer, either to our seeing and hearing, or to the first and involuntary acts of our understanding: but to our willingly *thinking* what we need not: our *inferring* evil, where it does not appear: to our *reasoning* concerning things which we do not see; our *supposing* what we have neither seen nor heard. This is what true love absolutely destroys. It tears up, root and branch, all *imagining* what we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspicious; and as it cannot design, so neither does it fear evil.

12. *It rejoiceth not in iniquity*: common as this is, even among those who bear the name of Christ; who scruple not to rejoice over their enemy, when he falleth either into affliction or error or sin. Indeed how hardly can they avoid this, who are zealous

ously attached to any party? How difficult is it for them not to be pleased with any fault which they discover in those of the opposite party? With any real or supposed blemish, either in their principles or practice? What warm defender of any cause is clear of these? Yea, who is so calm as to be altogether free? Who does not rejoice when his adversary makes a false step, which he thinks will advantage his own cause? Only a man of love. He alone weeps over either the sin or folly of his enemy, takes no pleasure in hearing or in repeating it, but rather desires that may be forgotten for ever.

13. But he *rejoiceth in the truth*, wheresoever it is found, in the *truth which is after godliness*, bringing forth its proper fruit, holiness of heart and holiness of conversation. He rejoices to find, that even those who oppose him, whether with regard to opinions or some points of practice, are nevertheless lovers of God, and in other respects unreprouable. He is glad to hear good of them, and to speak all he can consistently with Truth and Justice. Indeed, good in general is his glory and joy, whenever diffused throughout the race of mankind. As a citizen of the world he claims a share in the happiness of all the inhabitants of it. Because he is a man, he is not unconcerned in the welfare of any man: but enjoys whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men.

14. This Love *covereth all things*. (So without all doubt *πάσα αἰ ψα* should be translated: for otherwise it would be the very same with *πάντα ὑπομένει* *endureth all things*.) Because the merciful man *rejoiceth not in iniquity*, neither does he willingly make mention of it. Whatever evil he sees, hears or knows, he nevertheless conceals, so far as he can, without making himself *partaker of other men's sins*. Wheresoever or with whomsoever he is, if he sees any thing which he approves not, it goes

goes not out of his lips, unless to the person concerned, if haply he may gain his brother. So far is he from making the faults or failings of others the matter of his conversation, that of the absent he never does speak at all, unless he can speak well. A tale-bearer, a backbiter, a whisperer, an evil-speaker, is to him all one as a murderer. He would just as soon cut his neighbour's throat, as thus murder his reputation. Just as soon would he think of diverting himself by setting fire to his neighbour's house, as of thus "scattering abroad arrows, firebrands and death, and saying, Am I not in sport?"

He makes one only exception. Sometimes he is convinced, that it is for the glory of God, or (which comes to the same) the good of his neighbour, that an evil should not be covered. In this case, for the benefit of the innocent, he is constrained to declare the guilty. But even here,

1. He will not speak at all, till love, superior love constrains him.
2. He cannot do it from a general confused view of doing good, or of promoting the glory of God, but from a clear sight of some particular end, some determinate good which he pursues.
3. Still he cannot speak, unless he be fully convinced, that this very means is necessary to that end; that the end cannot be answered, at least not so effectually by any other way.
4. He then doth it with the utmost sorrow and reluctance, using it as the last and worst medicine, a desperate remedy in a desperate case, a kind of poison never to be used but to expel poison. Consequently,
5. He uses it as sparingly as possible. And this he does with fear and trembling, lest he should transgress the law of love by speaking too much, more than he would have done by not speaking at all.

15. Love *believeth all things*. It is always willing to think the best; to put the most favourable construction on every thing. It is ever ready to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any one's

one's character. It is easily convinced of (what it earnestly desires) the innocence or integrity of any man; or, at least, of the sincerity of his repentance, if he had once erred from the way. It is glad to excuse whatever is amiss: to condemn the offender as little as possible, and to make all the allowance for human weakness, which can be done without betraying the truth of God.

16. And when it can no longer believe, then Love *hopeth all things*. Is any evil related of any man? Love hopes, that the relation is not true, that the thing related was never done? Is it certain it was?—"But perhaps it was not done with such circumstances as are related; so that allowing the fact, there is room to hope, it was not so ill as it is represented." Was the action apparently, undeniably evil? Love hopes the intention was not so. Is it clear, the design was evil too?—"Yet it might not spring from the settled temper of the heart, but from a start of passion, or from some vehement temptation, which hurried the man beyond himself." And even when it cannot be doubted, but all the actions, designs and tempers are equally evil: still Love hopes that God will at last make bare his arm, and get himself the victory; and that "there shall be joy in heaven over this one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

17. Lastly, *It endureth all things*. This compleats the character of him that is truly merciful. He endureth not some, not many things only, not most, but absolutely *all things*. Whatever the injustice, the malice, the cruelty of men, can inflict, he is able to suffer. He calls nothing intolerable; he never says of any thing, "This is not to be borne." No: he can, not it might only do, but suffer all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. And all he suffers does not destroy his love, nor impair it in the least. It is proof against all. It is a flame that burns even in the midst of the great deep.

deep. "Many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it." It triumphs over all. *It never faileth*, either in time or in eternity.

"In obedience to what Heaven decrees,
Knowledge shall fail and prophecy shall cease,
But lasting Charity's more ample sway,
Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,
In happy triumph shall for ever live,
And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive."

So shall *the merciful obtain mercy*: not only by the blessing of God upon all their ways, by his now repaying the love they bear to their brethren, a thousand fold into their own bosom: but likewise by *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, in the "kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world."

18. For a little while you may say, "Wo is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine, love in the earth. Lost indeed! You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense) "See how *these Christians* love one another!" These Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! These Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, yea, by ten thousands, quick into hell! These Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! These Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder go not out of their streets! These Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! Yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian Churches!—Churches, (*Tell it not in Gath*—But alas, how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ
the

the Prince of peace, and wage continual war with each other! That convert sinners by burning them alive: that are *drunk with the blood of the saints*! —Does this praise belong only to *Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*? Nay, verily; but Reformed Churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant Churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood. And mean while, how do they also anathematize each other! Devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is every where found among them? Even where they agree in essentials, and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantialia of Religion. Who follows after only the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another? O God! How long? Shall thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock. Against hope believe in hope. It is your Father's good pleasure, yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more. The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains:" and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God. "They shall not then hurt or destroy, in all his holy mountain;" but "they shall call their walls salvation and their gates praise." They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us,—Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbour as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till he calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON

S E R M O N XXII.

DISCOURSE the Third on our LORD'S
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. V. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

- " Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.
- " Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of God.
- " Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness-sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- " Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.
- " Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

1. **H**OW excellent things are spoken of the love of our neighbour ! It is " the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Without this, all we have, all we do, all we suffer, is of no value in the sight of God. But it is that love of our neighbour which springs from the love of God : otherwise itself is nothing worth. It behoves us therefore to examine well upon what foundation our love of our neighbour stands : whether it is really built, upon the love of God ? Whether *we do love him, because he first loved us ?* Whether we are *pure in heart* ? For this is the foundation which shall never be moved. " Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God."

2. *The pure in heart* are they, whose hearts God hath *purified even as he is pure* ; who are purified

purified through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affection; who being *cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the loving fear of God.* They are, through the power of his grace, purified from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit; from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and gentleness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love him more and more, by that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which now engrosses their whole soul: so that now they love the Lord their God, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and mind, and strength.

3. But how little has this *purity of heart* been regarded, by the false teachers of all ages? They have taught men barely, to abstain from such outward impurities, as God hath forbidden by name. But they did not strike at the heart; and by not guarding against, they in effect, countenanced inward corruptions.

A remarkable instance of this, our Lord has given us, in the following words: "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery," ver. 28. And in explaining this, those blind leaders of the blind, only insist on men's abstaining from the outward act. "But I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," ver. 28. For God requireth truth in the inward parts. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. And *if thou incline unto iniquity with thy heart, the Lord will not hear thee.*

4 And God admits no excuse for retaining any thing, which is an occasion of impurity. Therefore "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell," ver. 29. If a person as dear to thee as thy right eye, be an occasion of thy thus offending God, a means of excit-
ing

ing unholy desire in thy soul ; delay not ; forcibly separate from them. " And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell," ver. 30. If any who seems as necessary to thee as thy right hand, be an occasion of sin, of impure desire ; even though it were never to go beyond the heart, never to break out in word or action : constrain thyself to an entire and final parting : cut them off at a stroke ; give them up to God. Any loss, whether of pleasure or substance or friends, is preferable to the loss of thy soul.

Two steps only it may not be improper to take, before such an absolute and final separation. First, Try whether the unclean spirit may not be driven out by fasting and prayer, and by carefully abstaining from every action and word and look which thou hast found to be an occasion of evil. Secondly, If thou art not by this means delivered ask counsel of him that watcheth over thy soul, or at least of some who have experience in the ways, of God, touching the time and manner of that separation. But confer not with flesh and blood, lest thou be " given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie."

5. Nor may marriage itself, holy and honourable as it is, be used, as a pretence for giving a loose to our desires. Indeed, " It hath been said, whosoever will put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." And then all was well ; though he alledged no cause, but that he did not like her ; or liked another better. " But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication" (that is, adultery ; the word *πορνεία* signifying unchastity in general, either in the married or unmarried state) causeth her to commit adultery, [if she marry again,]

again ;] and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." ver. 31, 32.

All polygamy is clearly forbidden in these words, wherein our Lord expressly declares, That for any woman who has a husband alive, to marry again is adultery. By parity of Reason, it is adultery for any man to marry again, so long as he has a wife alive. Yea, although they were divorced : unless that divorce had been for the cause of adultery. In that only case, there is no Scripture, which forbids the innocent person to marry again.

6. Such is the purity of heart which God requires, and works in those who believe on the Son of his love. And *blessed are they* who are thus *pure in heart, for they shall see God*. He will *manifest himself unto them*, not only *as he doth not unto the world*, but as he doth not always to his own children. He will bless them with the clearest communications of his Spirit, the most intimate "fellowship with the Father and with the Son." He will cause his presence to go continually before them, and the light of his countenance to shine upon them. It is the ceaseless prayer of their heart, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory:" and they have the petition they ask of him. They now see him by faith, (the veil of flesh being made, as it were transparent) even in these his lowest works, in all that surrounds them, in all that God has created and made. They see him in the height above, and in the depth beneath ; they see him filling all in all.

The pure in heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon, walking in brightness, in the sun when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him "making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind." They see him "preparing rain for the earth, and blessing the increase of it ; giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for the use of man." They see the Creator of
all

all, wisely governing all, and "upholding all things by the word of his power. O Lord! our Governor! How excellent is thy name in all the world!"

7. In all his providences relating to themselves, to their souls or bodies, the pure in heart do more particularly see God. They see his hand ever over them for good; giving them all things in weight, and measure, numbering the hairs of their head, making a hedge round about them and all that they have, and disposing all the circumstances of their life, according to the depth both of his wisdom and mercy.

8. But in a more especial manner, they see God in his ordinances. Whether they appear in the great congregation, to *pay him the honour due unto his name, and worship him in the beauty of holiness*; or *enter into their closets* and there pour out their souls before their *Father which is in secret*: whether they search the Oracles of God, or hear the Ambassadors of Christ proclaiming glad tidings of salvation; or by eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, *shew forth his death, till he come in the clouds of heaven*: in all these his appointed ways, they find such a near approach as cannot be express. They see him, as it were, face to face, and *talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend*: a fit preparation for those mansions above, wherein they shall *see him as he is*.

9. But how far were they from seeing God, who having heard, "that it had been said by them of old time, ver. 33. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:" interpreted it thus, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, when thou swearest by the Lord Jehovah. Thou shalt perform unto the Lord these *thine oaths*. But as to other oaths, he regardeth them not.

So the Pharisees taught. They not only allowed all manner of swearing in common conversation:

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but accounted even forswearing a little thing, so they had not sworn by the peculiar name of God.

But our Lord here absolutely forbids all common swearing, as well as all false swearing: and shews the heinousness of both, by the same awful consideration, That every creature is God's, and he is every where present, in all, and over all.

* "I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne." And therefore this is the same as to swear by him, who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens: † "Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool;" and he is as intimately present in earth as heaven: "neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King," and God is well known in her palaces. ‖ "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head; because thou canst not make one hair white or black:" because even this, it is plain, is not thine, but God's, the sole disposer of all in heaven and earth. § "But let your communication," your conversation, your discourse with each other, "be yea, yea; nay, nay;" a bare, serious affirming or denying "for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil:" *ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστὶν* is of the Evil one; proceedeth from the devil, and is a mark of his children.

10. That our Lord does not here forbid, the *swearing in judgment and truth*, when we are required so to do by a Magistrate, may appear, 1. From the occasion of this part of his discourse, the abuse he was here reproofing, which was false swearing, and common swearing; the swearing before a Magistrate being quite out of the question. 2. From the very words wherein he forms the general conclusion, *Let your communication, or discourse, be yea, yea; nay, nay.* 3. From his own example; for he answered himself upon oath, when required by a Magistrate. When ¶ *the High Priest said unto him*, "I adjure thee by the living

* Ver. 34. † Ver. 35. ‖ Ver. 36. § Ver. 37.

¶ Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

God,

God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus immediately answered in the affirmative, "Thou hast said" (i. e. the truth) "Nevertheless (or rather, Moreover) "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." 4. From the example of God, even the Father, * who "willing the more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." 5. From the example of St. Paul, who, we *think had the Spirit of God*, and well understood the mind of his Master. † "God is my witness, saith he, to the Romans, that without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers:" to the Corinthians, § "I call God to record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth:" and to the Philippians, || "God is my record, how greatly I long after you, in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Hence it undeniably appears, That if the Apostle knew the meaning of his Lord's words, they did not forbear swearing on weighty occasions, even to one another: how much less before a Magistrate?) And lastly, From that assertion of the great Apostle, concerning solemn swearing in general, (which it is impossible he could have mentioned without any touch of blame, if his Lord had totally forbidden it) ¶ "Men verily swear by the greater, [by one greater than themselves] and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife."

11. But the great lesson which our blessed Lord inculcates here, and which he illustrates by this example, is, That God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical Atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought, survey heaven and earth and all that is

* Heb. vi. 17. † Rom. i. 9. § 2 Cor. i. 23.

|| Phil. i. 8. ¶ Heb. vi. 36.

therein, as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe.

II. 1. Thus far our Lord has been more directly employed, in teaching the Religion of the Heart. He has shewn, What Christians are to be. He proceeds to shew, What they are to do also: how inward Holiness is to exert itself, in our outward conversation. "Blessed, saith he, are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

2. *The peace-makers*: the word in the original is *εἰρηνοποιός*. It is well known that *εἰρήνη* in the sacred Writings, implies all manner of good; every blessing that relates either to the soul or the body, to time or eternity. Accordingly when St. Paul in the titles of his Epistles, wishes *grace and peace* to the Romans or the Corinthians, it is as if he had said, "As a fruit of the free, undeserved love and favour of God, may you enjoy all blessings, spiritual and temporal, all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

3. Hence we may easily learn, in how wide a sense, the term *Peace-makers* is to be understood. In its literal meaning it implies, Those lovers of God and man, who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention: and accordingly labour with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or when it is kindled, from breaking out, or when it is broke out, from spreading any farther. They endeavour to calm the stormy spirits of men, to quiet their turbulent passions, to soften the minds of contending parties, and, if possible, reconcile them to each other. They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace,

where

where it is, as to restore it, where it is not. It is the joy of their heart, to promote, to confirm, to increase mutual good-will among men: but more especially among the children of God, however distinguished by things of smaller importance: that as they have all *one Lord, one faith*; as they are all *called in one hope of their calling*, so they may all “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.”

4. But in the full extent of the word, a *peace-maker* is one, that as he hath opportunity, *doth good unto all men*: one that being filled with the love of God and all mankind, cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party: or to those of his own opinions; no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith: but steps over all these narrow bounds, that he may do good to every man; that he may some way or other manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He doth good to them all, as he hath opportunity, that is, on every possible occasion; *redeeming the time*, in order thereto, *buying up every opportunity*, improving every hour, losing no moment wherein he may profit another. He does good, not of one particular kind, but good in general: in every possible way, employing herein all his talents of every kind; all his power and faculties of body and soul; all his fortune, his interest, his reputation; desiring only, that when his Lord cometh he may say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

5. He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to *deal his bread to the hungry*, and to *cover the naked with a garment*. Is any a stranger? He takes him in, and relieves him according to his necessities.

Are

Are any sick or in prison? He visits them, and administers such help as they stand most in need of. And all this he does, not as unto man; but remembering him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

6. How much more does he rejoice, if he can do any good to the soul of any man! This power indeed belongeth unto God. It is he only that changes the heart, without which every other change is lighter than vanity. Nevertheless it pleases him who worketh all in all, to help man chiefly by man; to convey his own power and blessing and love, through one man to another. Therefore, although it be certain, That *the help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself*, yet has no man need, on this account, to stand idle in his vineyard. The *peace-maker* cannot: he is ever labouring therein, and as an instrument in God's hand, preparing the ground for his Master's use, or sowing the seed of the kingdom, or watering what is already sown, if haply God may give the increase. According to the measure of grace which he has received, he uses all diligence, either to reprove the gross sinner, to reclaim those who run on headlong in the broad way of destruction; or to *give light to them that sit in darkness*, and are ready to *perish for lack of knowledge*; or to *support the weak*, to *lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees*; or to bring back and heal that which was *lame and turned out of the way*. Nor is he less zealous to confirm those who are already striving to enter in at the strait gate; to strengthen those that stand, that they may *run with patience the race which is set before them*; to *build up in their most holy faith*, those that know in whom they have believed: to exhort them to stir up the gift of God which is in them, that daily growing in grace, an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly,

abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

7. Blessed are they who are thus continually employed, in the work of faith and the labour of love. *For they shall be called, that is, shall be* (a common Hebraism) *the children of God.* God shall continue unto them the spirit of adoption, yea, shall pour it more abundantly into their hearts. He shall bless them with all the blessings of his children. He shall acknowledge them as sons before angels and men; "and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

III. 1. One would imagine such a person as has been above described, so full of genuine Humility, so unaffectedly serious, so mild and gentle, so free from all selfish design, so devoted to God, and such an active lover of men, should be the darling of mankind. But our Lord was better acquainted with human nature, in its present state. He therefore closes the character of this man of God, with shewing him the treatment he is to expect in the world. "Blessed, saith he, are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

2. In order to understand this thoroughly, let us, first enquire, Who are they that are persecuted. And this we may easily learn from St. Paul: * "As of old, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." † "Yea, saith the Apostle, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." The same we are taught by St. John. || "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." As if he had said, The Brethren, the Christians cannot be loved, but by them who have passed from death unto life. And most expressly, by our Lord:

* Gal. iv. 29. † 2 Tim iii. 12. || 1 John iii. 13.

"If

* "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world—therefore the world hated you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

By all these scriptures it manifestly appears, Who they are that are persecuted: namely, The righteous, "He that is born of the spirit; all that will live godly in Christ Jesus:" they that are *passed from death unto life*; those who *are not of the world*: all those who are meek and lowly in heart, that mourn for God, that hunger after his likeness; all that love God and their neighbour, and therefore as they have opportunity, do good unto all men.

3. If it be, secondly, enquired, Why they are persecuted? The answer is equally plain and obvious. It is *for righteousness sake*; because they are righteous; because they are *born after the spirit*; because they *will live godly in Christ Jesus*; because they *are not of the world*. Whatever may be pretended, this is the real cause: be their infirmities more or less, still, if it were not for this, they would be borne with, and the world would love its own. They are persecuted, because they are *poor in spirit*, that is, say the world, "Poor-spirited, mean, dastardly souls, good for nothing, not fit to live in the world:" because they *mourn*; "They are such dull, heavy, lumpish creatures, enough to sink any one's spirits that sees them! They are mere death-heads; they kill innocent mirth, and spoil company wherever they come:" because they are *meek*; "Tame, passive fools, just fit to be trampled upon:" because they *hunger and thirst after righteousness*; "a parcel of hot-brained enthusiasts, gaping after they know not what, not content with rational Religion, but running mad

* John xv. 18, &c.

after

after raptures and inward feelings :” because they are *merciful*, lovers of all, lovers of the evil and unthankful : “ Encouraging all manner of wickedness ; nay, tempting people to do mischief by impunity : and men who, it is to be feared, have their own Religion still to seek ; very loose in their principles :” because they are *pure in heart* : “ Uncharitable creatures ! That damn all the world, but those that are of their own sort ! Blasphemous wretches, that pretend to make God a liar, to live without sin !” Above all, because they are *peace-makers*, because they take all opportunities of doing good to all men. This is the grand reason why they have been persecuted in all ages, and will be till the restitution of all things.

“ If they would but keep their Religion to themselves, it would be tolerable. But it is this spreading their errors, this infecting so many others, which is not to be endured. They do so much mischief in the world, that they ought to be tolerated no longer. It is true, the men do some things well enough ; they relieve some of the poor. But this too, is only done to gain the more to their party ; and so, in effect, to do the more mischief.” Thus the men of the world sincerely think and speak. And the more the kingdom of God prevails, the more the peace-makers are enabled to propagate lowliness, meekness, and all other divine tempers : the more mischief is done, in their account. Consequently, the more are they enraged against the authors of this, and the more vehemently will they persecute them.

4. Let us, thirdly, enquire, Who are they that persecute them ? St. Paul answers, “ He that is born after the flesh ;” every one who is not *born of the spirit*, or at least, desirous so to be : all that do not, at least, labour to *live godly in Christ Jesus* : all that are not *passed from death unto life*, and consequently cannot *love the brethren : the world*, that is according to our Saviour’s account, “ They who know

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know not him that sent me:" they who know not God, even the loving, pardoning God, by the teaching of his own Spirit.

- The reason is plain. The spirit which is in the world is directly opposite to the spirit which is of God. It must therefore needs be, that those who are of the world, will be opposite to those who are of God. There is the utmost contrariety between them, in all their opinions, their desires, designs and tempers. And hitherto *the leopard and the kid*, cannot *lie down in peace together*. The proud, because he is proud, cannot but persecute the lowly; the light and airy, those that mourn: and so in every other kind; the unlikeness of disposition, (were there no other) being a perpetual ground of enmity. Therefore (were it only on this account) all the servants of the devil, will persecute the children of God.

5. Should it be enquired, fourthly, How they will persecute them? It may be answered in general, Just in that manner and measure which the wise Disposer of all, sees what will be most for his glory; will tend most to his children's growth in grace, and the enlargement of his own kingdom. There is no one branch of God's government of the world, which is more to be admired than this. His ear is never heavy to the threatenings of the persecutor, or the cry of the persecuted. His eye is ever open, and his hand stretched out, to direct every, the minutest circumstance. When the storm shall begin, how high it shall rise, which way it shall point its course, when and how it shall end, are all determined by his unerring wisdom. The ungodly are only a sword of his: an instrument which he uses, as it pleaseth him, and which itself, when the gracious ends of his Providence are answered, is cast into the fire.

At some rare times, as when Christianity was planted first, and while it was taking root in the earth; as also when the pure doctrine of Christ began to be planted again in our nation: God permitted

mitted the storm to rise high, and his children were called to resist unto blood. There was a peculiar reason why he suffered this with regard to the Apostles, That their evidence might be the more unexceptionable. But from the annals of the Church, we learn another, and a far different reason, why he suffered the heavy persecutions which arose in the second and third centuries: namely, because the mystery of iniquity did so strongly work, because of the monstrous corruptions which even then reigned in the Church: these God chastised, and at the same time strove to heal, by those severe but necessary visitations.

Perhaps the same observation may be made, with regard to the grand persecution in our own land. God had dealt very graciously with our nation; he had poured out various blessings upon us. He had given us peace abroad and at home; and a King wise and good, beyond his years. And above all, he had caused the pure light of his gospel to arise and shine amongst us. But what return did he find? *He looked for righteousness: But behold a cry!* A cry of oppression and wrong, of ambition and injustice, of malice and fraud and covetousness. Yea, the cry of those who even then expired in the flames, entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. It was then God arose to maintain his own cause, against those that held the truth in unrighteousness. Then he sold them into the hands of their persecutors, by a judgment mixt with mercy: an affliction to punish, and yet a medicine to heal the grievous backslidings of his people.

6. But it is seldom that God suffers the storm to rise so high, as torture, or death, or bonds, or imprisonment. Whereas his children are frequently called to endure those lighter kinds of persecution; they frequently suffer the estrangement of kinsfolks; the loss of the friends that were as their own soul. They find the truth of their Lord's word (con-

cerning the event, though not the design of his coming) * “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace upon earth? I tell you nay; but rather division.” And hence will naturally follow loss of business or employment, and consequently of substance. But all these circumstances likewise are under the wise direction of God, who allots to every one what is most expedient for him.

7. But the persecution which attends all the children of God, is that our Lord describes in the following words. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you (shall persecute, by reviling you) and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake.” This cannot fail; it is the very badge of our discipleship: it is one of the seals of our calling. It is a sure portion, entailed on all the children of God: if we have it not, we are bastards and not sons. Straight through *evil report*, as well as *good report*, lies the only way to the kingdom. The meek, serious, humble, zealous lovers of God and man, are of good report among their Brethren; but of evil report with the world, who count and treat them “as the filth and off-scouring of all things.”

8. Indeed some have supposed, that before the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, the scandal of the cross will cease: that God will cause Christians to be esteemed and loved even by those who are as yet in their sins. Yea, and sure it is, that even now, he at some times suspends the contempt as well as the fierceness of men: *he makes a man's enemies to be at peace with him* for a season, and gives him favour with his bitterest persecutors. But setting aside this exempt case, *the scandal of the cross is not yet ceased*: but a man may say still, “If I please men, I am not the servant of Christ:” let no man therefore regard that pleasing suggestion (pleasing doubtless to flesh and blood) “That bad men only *pretend* to hate and despise them that are

* Luke xii. 51.

good, but do indeed love and esteem them in their hearts." Not so: they may employ them sometimes; but it is for their own profit. They may put confidence in them; for they know their ways are not like other men's. But still they love them not; unless so far as the Spirit of God may be striving with them. Our Saviour's words are express: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Yea, (setting aside what exceptions may be made by the preventing grace or the peculiar Providence of God) it hateth them as cordially and sincerely, as ever it did their Master.

9. It remains only to enquire, How are the children of God to behave, with regard to persecution? And first, They ought not knowingly or designedly to bring it upon themselves. This is contrary both to the example and advice of our Lord and all his Apostles; who teach us not only not to seek, but to avoid it, as far as we can, without injuring our conscience; without giving up any part of that righteousness, which we are to prefer before life itself. So our Lord expressly saith, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another," which is indeed, when it can be taken, the most unexceptionable way of avoiding persecution.

10. Yet think not, that you can always avoid it, either by this, or any other means. If ever that idle imagination steals into your heart, put it to flight by that earnest caution, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." But will this screen you from persecution? Not unless you have more wisdom than your Master, or more innocence than the Lamb of God.

Neither desire to avoid it, to escape it wholly; for if you do, you are none of his. If you escape

the persecution, you escape the blessing; the blessing of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. If you are not persecuted for righteousness sake, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will also deny us."

11. Nay, rather, *rejoice and be exceeding glad*, when men persecute you for his sake: when *they persecute you by reviling you, and by saying all manner of evil against you falsely*; (which they will not fail to mix with every kind of persecution; they must blacken you to excuse themselves.) "For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you," those who were most eminently holy in heart and life; yea, and all the righteous which ever have been from the beginning of the world. Rejoice, because by this mark also, ye know unto whom ye belong. And because *great is your reward in heaven*:" the reward purchased by the blood of the Covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as holiness of heart and life. "Be exceeding glad; knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

12. Mean time, let no persecution turn you out of the way, of lowliness and meekness, of love and benificence. * "Ye have heard indeed that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." And your miserable Teachers have hence allowed you to avenge yourselves, to return evil for evil.

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil—Not thus; not by returning it in kind. "But (rather than do this) whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

* Ver. 38, &c.

So invincible let thy meekness be. And be thy love suitable thereto. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." Only, give not away that which is another man's, that which is not thine own. Therefore, 1. Take care to owe no man any thing. For what thou owest, is not thy own, but another man's. 2. Provide for those of thine own household. This also God hath required of thee: and what is necessary to sustain them in life and godliness, is also not thine own. Then, 3. Give or lend all that remains from day to day, or from year to year. Only first, seeing thou canst not give or lend to all, remember the household of faith.

13. The meekness and love we are to feel, the kindness we are to shew to them which persecute us for righteousness sake, our blessed Lord describes farther in the following verses. O that they were engraven upon our hearts!

* "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy." (God indeed had said only the former part, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." The children of the devil had added the latter, "And hate thy enemy") But I say unto you, 1. *Love your enemies.* See that you bear a tender good-will, to those who are most bitter of spirit against you, who wish you all manner of evil. 2. *Bless them that curse you.* Are there any whose bitterness of spirit breaks forth in bitter words? Who are continually cursing and reproaching you when you are present, and saying all evil against you when absent? So much the rather do you bless. In conversing with them, use all mildness and softness of language. Reprove them, by repeating a better lesson before them, by shewing them how they ought to have spoken. And in speaking of them, say all the good you can, without violating the rules of Truth and Justice. 3. *Do*

good to them that hate you. Let your actions shew, that you are as real in love as they in hatred. Return good for evil. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." 4. If you can do nothing more, at least "pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." You can never be disabled from doing this; nor can all their malice or violence hinder you. Pour out your souls to God, not only for those, who did this once but now repent. This is a little thing. * "If thy brother seven times a day, turn and say unto thee, I repent;" that is, if after ever so many relapses, he gives thee reason to believe, that he is really and thoroughly changed, *then thou shalt forgive him*, so as to trust him, to put him in thy bosom, as if he had never sinned against thee at all. But pray for, wrestle with God, for those that do not repent, that now despitefully use thee and persecute thee. Thus far forgive them, "† not until seven times only, but until seventy times seven." Whether they repent or no, yea though they appear farther and farther from it, yet shew them this instance of kindness: *that ye may be the children*, that ye may approve yourselves the genuine children of your Father which is in heaven, who shews his goodness by giving such blessings as they are capable of, even to his stubbornest enemies; "who maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. || For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?" Who pretend to no Religion; whom ye yourselves acknowledge to be without God in the world. § *And if ye salute*, shew kindness in word or deed, to your Brethren, your friends or kinsfolk only: *what do ye more than others?* Than those who have no Religion at all? *Do not even the Publicans so?* Nay, but follow ye a better pattern than them. In patience, in long-suffering, in mercy, in beneficence

* Luke xvii. 3. † Matt. xviii. 22, || Ver. 47. § Ver. 48.

of every kind, to all, even to your bitterest persecutors : * " Be ye Christians perfect (in kind, though not in degree) even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

III. Behold Christianity in its native form ! as delivered by its great Author ! This is the genuine Religion of Jesus Christ. Such he presents it to him whose eyes are opened. See a picture of God, so far as he is imitable by man ! A picture drawn by God's own hand ! " Behold, ye despisers and wonder and perish ! " Or rather, wonder and adore ! Rather cry out, Is this the Religion of Jesus of Nazareth ? The Religion which I persecuted ! Let me no more be found even to fight against God. Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ?—What beauty appears in the whole ! How just a symmetry ! What exact proportion is every part ! How desirable is the happiness here described ? How venerable, how lovely the holiness ?—This is the spirit of Religion : the quintessence of it. These are indeed the fundamentals of Christianity. O that we may not be hearers of it only ! " Like a man beholding his own face in a glass, who goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Nay, but let us steadily " look into this perfect law of liberty, and continue therein." Let us not rest, until every line thereof is transcribed into our own hearts. Let us watch and pray and believe and love, and *strive for the mastery*, till every part of it shall appear in our soul graven there by the finger of God : till we are " holy as he which hath called us is holy, perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect ! "

* Ver. 48.

DISCOURSE

S E R M O N XXIII.

DISCOURSE the Fourth upon our LORD'S
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

- " Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.
- " Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
- " Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house.
- " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1. **T**HE beauty or Holiness, of that inward man of the heart, which is renewed after the image of God, cannot but strike every eye which God hath opened, every enlightened understanding. The ornament of a meek, humble, loving spirit, will at least excite the approbation of all those who are capable in any degree of discerning spiritual good and evil. From the hour men begin to emerge out of the darkness which covers the giddy, unthinking world, they cannot but perceive how desirable a thing it is to be thus transformed into the likeness of him that created us. This inward Religion bears the shape of God, so visibly imprest upon it, that a soul must be wholly immersed in flesh and blood, when he can doubt of its divine original. We may say of this in a secondary sense, even as of the Son of God himself,

self, That it is the *brightness of his glory, and express image of his person*: ἀπαύρασμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. *The beaming forth of his eternal glory*; and yet so tempered and softened, that even the children of men, herein see God and live: χαράζοντες τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. “*The character, the stamp, the living impression, of his person*,” who is the fountain of beauty and love, the original source of all excellency and perfection.

2. If Religion therefore were carried no farther than this, they could have no doubt concerning it: they should have no objection against pursuing it with the whole ardor of their souls. But why, say they, is it clogged with other things? What need of loading it with *doing and suffering*? These are what damps the vigor of the soul, and sinks it down to earth again. Is it not enough to *follow after Charity*? To soar upon the wings of Love? Will it not suffice, to worship God who is a Spirit, with the spirit of our minds, without encumbering ourselves with outward things, or even thinking of them at all? Is it not better, that the whole extent of our thought should be taken up with high and heavenly contemplation? And that instead of busying ourselves at all about externals, we should only commune with God in our hearts.

3. Many eminent men have spoken thus: have advised us “To cease from all outward action;” wholly to withdraw from the world; to leave the body behind us; to abstract ourselves from all sensible things: to have no concern at all about outward Religion, but to “work all virtues in the will, as the far more excellent way, more perfective of the soul, as well as more acceptable to God.

4. It needed not that any should tell our Lord, of this master-piece of the wisdom from beneath! This fairest of all the devices wherewith Satan hath ever perverted the right ways of the Lord. And O! what instruments hath he found from time to time, to employ in this his service! To wield this
grand

grand engine of hell, against some of the most important truths of God! Men that "would deceive if it were possible the very Elect;" the men of faith and love: yea, that have for a season deceived and led away no inconsiderable number of them; who have fallen in all ages into the gilded snare, and hardly escaped with the skin of their teeth.

5. But has our Lord been wanting on his part? Has he not sufficiently guarded us against this pleasing delusion? Has he not armed us here with armour of proof against Satan *transformed into an angel of light*? Yea, verily: he here defends, in the clearest and strongest manner, the active, patient religion he had just described: what can be fuller and plainer than the words he immediately subjoins, to what he had said of doing and suffering? "Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt have lost its favour, wherewithal shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

In order fully to explain and enforce these important words, I shall endeavour to shew, First, that Christianity is essentially a social Religion, and that to turn it into a solitary one, is to destroy it: Secondly, that to conceal this Religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its Author. I shall, Thirdly, answer some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application.

I. 1. First. I shall endeavour to shew, that Christianity is essentially a social Religion; and that to turn it into a solitary Religion, is indeed to destroy it.

By

By Christianity I mean, that method of worshipping God, which is here revealed to man by Jesus Christ. When I say, This is essentially a social Religion, I mean not only, that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men. And in shewing this, I shall confine myself to those considerations, which will arise from the very discourse before us. But if this be shewn, then doubtless to turn this Religion into a solitary one, is to destroy it.

Not that we can in any wise condemn, the intermixing solitude or retirement with Society. This is not only allowable, but expedient: nay, it is necessary as daily experience shews, for every one that either already is, or desires to be a real Christian. It can hardly be that we should spend one entire day, in a continued intercourse with men, without suffering loss in our soul, and in some measure grieving the holy Spirit of God. We have need daily to retire from the world, at least, morning and evening, to converse with God, to commune more freely with our Father which is in secret. Nor indeed can a man of experience condemn, even longer seasons of religious retirement, so they do not imply any neglect of the worldly employ, wherein the providence of God has placed us.

2. Yet such retirement must not swallow up all our time; this would be to destroy, not advance true Religion. For, that the Religion described by our Lord in the foregoing words, cannot subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men, is manifest from hence, that several of the most essential branches thereof, can have no place, if we have no intercourse with the world.

3. There is no disposition (for instance) which is more essential to Christianity than meekness. Now although this, as it implies resignation to God,

or

or patience in pain and sickness, may subsist in a desert, in a hermit's cell, in total solitude; yet as it implies (which it no less necessarily does) mildness, gentleness and long-suffering, it cannot possibly have a being, it has no place under heaven, without an intercourse with other men. So that to attempt turning this into a solitary virtue, is to destroy it from the face of the earth.

4. Another necessary branch of true Christianity, is peace-making, or doing of good. That this is equally essential with any of the other parts of the Religion of Jesus Christ, there can be no stronger argument to evince (and therefore it would be absurd to alledge any other) than that it is here inserted in the original plan he has laid down, of the fundamentals of his Religion. Therefore to set aside this, is the same daring insult on the authority of our great Master, as to set aside mercifulness, purity of heart, or any other branch of his institution. But this is apparently set aside, by all who call us to the wilderness; who recommend entire solitude either to the babes, or the young men, or the Fathers in Christ. For will any man affirm, that a solitary Christian (so called, though it is little less than a contradiction in terms) can be a merciful man? That is, one that takes every opportunity of doing all good to all men? What can be more plain, than that this fundamental branch of the Religion of Jesus Christ, cannot possibly subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men?

5. But is it not expedient however (one might naturally ask) to converse only with good men? only with those whom we know to be meek and merciful; holy of heart and holy of life? Is it not expedient to refrain from any conversation or intercourse, with men of the opposite character? Men who do not obey, perhaps do not believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? The advice of St. Paul to the Christians at Corinth, may seem

to favour this. “ * I wrote unto you in an Epistle, not to company with fornicators.” And it is certainly not adviseable so to company with them, or with any of the workers of iniquity, as to have any particular familiarity, or any strictness of friendship with them. To contract or continue an intimacy with any such, is no way expedient for a Christian. It must necessarily expose him to abundance of dangers and snares, out of which he can have no reasonable hope of deliverance.

But the Apostle does not forbid us, to have any intercourse at all, even with the men that know not God. For then, says he, *ye must needs go out of the world*, which he could never advise them to do. But he subjoins, † *If any man that is called a brother, that professes himself a Christian, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner*: “ Now I have written unto you not to keep company with him; with such an one, no not to eat.” This must necessarily imply, that we break off all familiarity, all intimacy of acquaintance with them. § *Yet count him not*, saith the Apostle elsewhere, *as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*: plainly shewing that even in such a case as this, we are not to renounce all fellowship with him: so that here is no advice, to separate wholly, even from wicked men. Yea, these very words teach us quite the contrary.

6. Much more the words of our Lord: who is so far from directing us, to break off all commerce with the world, that without it, according to his account of Christianity, we cannot be Christians at all. It would be easy to shew, that some intercourse even with ungodly and unholy men, is absolutely needful in order to the full exertion of every temper, which he has described as the way to the kingdom: that it is indispensibly necessary in order to the compleat exercise of poverty of spirit, of mourn-

* 1 Cor. v. 9. † Ver. 11. § 2 Thess. iii. 15.

ing, and of every other disposition which has a place here, in the genuine Religion of Jesus Christ. Yea, it is necessary to the very being of several of them; of that meekness, for examp'le, which instead of demanding *an eye for an eye, or a tooth, for a tooth*, doth *not resist evil*; but causes us rather, when smitten *on the right cheek*, to *turn the other also*: of that mercifulness, whereby we "love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us:" and of that complication of love and all holy tempers, which is exercised in suffering for righteousness sake. Now all these, it is clear, could have no being, were we to have no commerce with any but real Christians.

7. Indeed were we wholly to separate ourselves from sinners, how could we possibly answer that character, which our Lord gives us in these very words; "Ye (Christians, ye that are lowly, serious and meek; ye that hunger after righteousness, that love God and man, that do good to all, and therefore suffer evil: ye) are the salt of the earth." It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine favour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch: to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the Providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others; that every holy temper, and word, and work of yours, may have an influence on them also. By this means a check will in some measure be given, to the corruption which is in the world; and a small part, at least, saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.

8. That we may the more diligently labour to season all we can, with every holy and heavenly temper, our Lord proceeds to shew the desperate state of those, who do not impart the Religion they have

have received; which indeed they cannot possibly fail to do, so long as it remains in their own hearts. "If the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." If ye who were holy and heavenly-minded, and consequently zealous of good works, have no longer that savour in yourselves, and do therefore no longer season others; if you are grown flat; insipid, dead, both careless of your own soul, and useless to the souls of other men, *wherewith shall ye be salted?* How shall ye be recovered? What help? What hope? Can tasteless salt be restored to its savour! No; *it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out*, even as the mire in the streets, *and to be trodden under foot of men*, to be overwhelmed with everlasting contempt. If ye had never known the Lord, there might have been hope, if ye had never been found in him. But what can you now say to that solemn declaration; just parallel to what he hath here spoken? * "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he (the Father) taketh away. He that abideth in me, and I in him bringeth forth much fruit.—If a man abide not in me, (or, do not bring forth fruit) he is cast out as a branch and withered; and men gather them (not to plant them again, but) to cast them into the fire."

9. Toward those who have never tasted of the good word, God is indeed pitiful and of tender mercy. But Justice takes place with regard to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have afterwards "turned back from the holy commandment then delivered to them." † "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened," in whose hearts God had once shined, to enlighten them with the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; "who have tasted of the heavenly gift," of redemption in his blood, the

* John xv. 2, 5, 6. † Heb. vi. 4, &c.

forgiveness of sins; "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," of lowliness, of meekness, and of the love of God and man shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them: "and have fallen away." *καὶ παρυσίας* (Here is not a supposition, but a flat declaration of matter of fact) "to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

But that none may misunderstand these awful words, it should be carefully observed, 1. Who they are that are here spoken of; namely, they, and they only, who *were once thus enlightened*. They only *who did taste of that heavenly gift, and were thus made partakers of the Holy Ghost*. So that all who have not experienced these things, are wholly unconcerned in this Scripture. 2. What that falling away is which is here spoken of. It is an absolute, total apostacy. A believer may fall, and not fall away. He may fall and rise again. And if he should fall, even into sin, yet this case dreadful as it is, is not desperate. For "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." But let him above all things beware, lest his "heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin:" lest he should sink lower and lower, till he wholly fall away, till he become as *salt that hath lost its savour: for if we thus sin wilfully, after we have received the experimental* "knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

II. 1. "But although we may not wholly separate ourselves from mankind, although it be granted, we ought to season them, with the Religion which God has wrought in our hearts, yet may not this be done insensibly? May we not convey this into others in a secret, and almost imperceptible manner?"

manner? So that scarce any one shall be able to observe, how or when it is done? Even as salt conveys it own savour, into that which is seasoned thereby, without any noise, and without being liable to any outward observation. And if so, although we do not go out of the world, yet we may lie hid in it. We may thus far keep our Religion to ourselves, and not offend those whom we cannot help."

2. Of this plausible reasoning of flesh and blood, our Lord was well aware also. And he has given a full answer to it in those words, which come now to be considered: in explaining which I shall endeavour to shew, as I proposed to do in the second place, That so long as true Religion abides in our hearts, it is impossible to conceal it, as well as absolutely contrary to the design of its great Author. And, first, it is impossible for any that have it, to conceal the Religion of Jesus Christ. This our Lord makes plain beyond all contradiction, by a two-fold comparison. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set upon an hill cannot be hid."

Ye Christians are the light of the world, with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous, as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it, without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men, and while ye are among them, it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness, and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action; when ye exercise yourselves in the labour of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian: yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon an hill, as an holy, zealous, active lover of God and man.

3. It is true, men who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, will take all possible pains to prove, That the light which is in you is darkness. They will say evil, all manner of evil, falsely, of the good which is in you: they will lay to your charge that which is farthest from your thoughts, which is the very reverse of all you are and all you do. And your patient continuance in well-doing, your meek suffering all things for the Lord's sake, your calm, humble joy in the midst of persecution, your unwearied labour to overcome evil with good, will make you still more visible and conspicuous than ye were before.

4. So impossible it is, to keep our Religion from being seen, unless we cast it away; so vain is the thought, of hiding the light, unless by putting it out. Sure it is, that a secret, unobserved Religion cannot be the Religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever Religion can be concealed, is not Christianity. If a Christian could be hid, he could not be compared to a city set upon an hill; to the light of the world, the sun shining from heaven, and seen by all the world below. Never therefore let it enter into the heart of him whom God hath renewed in the spirit of his mind, to hide that light, to keep his Religion to himself; especially considering it is not only impossible, to conceal true Christianity, but likewise absolutely contrary to the design of the great Author of it.

5. This plainly appears from the following words: "Neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel." As if he had said, As men do not light a candle, only to cover and conceal it, so neither does God enlighten any soul with his glorious knowledge and love, to have it covered or concealed, either by prudence, falsely so called, or shame, or voluntary humility: to have it hid either in a desert, or in the world; either by avoiding men, or in conversing with them. "But they put it on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that

that are in the house." In like manner, it is the design of God, that every Christian should be in an open point of view: that he may give light to all around, that he may visibly express the Religion of Jesus Christ.

6. Thus hath God in all ages spoken to the world, not only by precept but by example also. He hath *not left himself without witness* in any nation where the sound of the gospel had gone forth, without a few who testified his truth, by their lives as well as their words. These have been "as lights shining in a dark place." And from time to time they have been the means of enlightening some, of preserving a remnant, a little seed which was "counted unto the Lord for a generation." They have led a few poor sheep out of the darkness of the world, and guided their feet into the way of peace.

7. One might imagine, that where both Scripture and the reason of things speak so clearly and expressly, there could not be much advanced on the other side, at least, not with any appearance of truth. But they who imagine thus, know little of the depths of Satan. After all that Scripture and Reason have said, so exceeding plausible are the pretences for solitary Religion, for a Christian's going out of the world, or at least hiding himself in it, that we need all the wisdom of God to see through the snare, and all the power of God to escape it: so many and strong are the objections which have been brought, against being social, open, active Christians.

III. 1. To answer these was the third thing which I proposed. And, first, it has been often objected, That Religion does not lie in outward things, but in the heart, the inmost soul: that it is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man: that outside Religion is nothing worth; seeing God "delighteth not in burnt-

Burnt-offerings, in outward services, but a pure and holy heart is the "sacrifice he will not despise."

I answer, it is most true, That the root of Religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul: that this is the union of the soul with God; the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches. And these are, the several instances of outward obedience, which partake of the same nature with the root; and consequently, are not only marks or signs, but substantial parts of Religion.

It is also true, That bare outside Religion, which has no root in the heart, is nothing worth; that God delighted not in *sach* outward services, no more than in Jewish burnt-offerings, and that a pure and holy heart is a sacrifice, with which he is always well pleased. But he is also well pleased with all that outward service, which arises from the heart: with the sacrifice of our prayers, (whether public or private) of our praises and thanksgivings: with the sacrifice of our goods, humbly devoted to him, and employed wholly to his glory: and with that of our bodies, which he peculiarly claims: which the Apostle *beseeches* us, "by the mercies of God to present unto him, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."

2. A second objection, nearly related to this, is, That Love is all in all: that it is "the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment," of every commandment of God: that all we do and all we suffer, if we have not Charity or Love, profiteth us nothing; and therefore the Apostle directs us, "To follow after Charity," and terms this, "The more excellent way."

I answer, it is granted, That the love of God and man, arising from *faith unfeigned*, is all in all, the fulfilling of the law, the end of every commandment of God. It is true, that without this, whatever we do, whatever we suffer, profits us nothing. But it does not follow, That Love is all

in such a sense, as to supercede either faith or good works. It is "the fulfilling of the law," not by releasing us from but by constraining us to obey it. It is "the end of the commandment," as every commandment leads to and centers in it. It is allowed, that whatever we do or suffer, without Love, profits us nothing. But withal whatever we do or suffer in Love, though it were only the suffering reproach for Christ, or the giving a cup of cold water in his name, it shall in nowise lose its reward.

3. "But does not the Apostle direct us, to *follow after Charity*? And does he not term it, a *more excellent way*?"—He does direct us to *follow after Charity*. But not after that alone. His words are, * "Follow after Charity; and desire spiritual gifts." Yea, *follow after Charity*; and desire to spend and to be spent for your brethren. *Follow after Charity*; and as you have opportunity, do good to all men.

In the same verse also, wherein he terms this, the way of Love, a *more excellent way*, he directs the Corinthians to desire other gifts besides it: yea, to desire them earnestly. † "Covet earnestly, saith he, the best gifts: and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way." More excellent than what? Than the gifts of *healing*, of *speaking with tongues*, and of *interpreting*, mentioned in the preceding verse. But not more excellent than the way of Obedience. Of this the Apostle is not speaking. Neither is he speaking of outward Religion at all. So that this text is quite wide of the present question.

But suppose the Apostle had been speaking of outward as well as inward Religion, and comparing them together: suppose in the comparison he had given the preference ever so much to the latter: suppose he had preferred (as he justly might) a lov-

* 1 Cor. xiv. 1. † 1 Cor. xii. 31.

ing heart, before all outward works whatever : yet it would not follow, that we were to reject either one or the other. No; God hath joined them together from the beginning of the world. And let no man put them asunder.

4. "*But God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* And is not this enough? Nay, ought we not to employ the whole strength of our mind herein? Does not attending to outward things clog the soul, that it cannot soar aloft in holy contemplation? Does it not damp the vigor of our thought? Has it not a natural tendency, to encumber and distract the mind? Whereas St. Paul would have us *to be without carefulness, and to wait upon the Lord without distraction.*"

I answer, God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Yea, and this is enough : we ought to employ the whole strength of our mind therein. But then I would ask, What is it to worship God, a spirit, in spirit and in truth? Why, it is to worship him with our spirit; to worship him in that manner, which none but spirits are capable of. It is, to believe in him, as a wise, just, holy Being, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity : and yet merciful, gracious and long-suffering; forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin : casting all our sins behind his back, and accepting us in the Beloved. It is, To love him, to delight in him, to desire him, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength : to imitate him we love, by purifying ourselves, even as he is pure ; and to obey him whom we love and in whom we believe, both in thought, and word, and work. Consequently, one branch of the worshipping God in spirit and in truth, is the keeping his outward commandments. To glorify him therefore with our bodies as well as with our spirits, to go through outward work with hearts lifted up to him, to make
our

our daily employment a sacrifice to God; to buy and sell, to eat and drink to his glory: this is worshipping God in spirit and in truth, as much as the praying to him in a wilderness.

5. But if so, then Contemplation is only one way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Therefore to give ourselves up entirely to this, would be to destroy many branches of spiritual worship, all equally acceptable to God, and equally profitable, not hurtful, to the soul. For it is a great mistake to suppose, That an attention to those outward things, whereto the Providence of God hath called us, is any clog to a Christian, or any hinderance at all to his always seeing Him that is invisible. It does not at all damp the ardor of his thought, it does not encumber or distract his mind; it gives him no uneasy or hurtful care, who does it all as unto the Lord: who hath learned, whatsoever he doth in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus: having only one eye of the soul, which moves round on outward things, and one immoveably fixed on God. Learn what this meaneth, ye poor recluses, that you may clearly discern your own littleness of faith. Yea, that you may no longer judge others by yourselves, go and learn what that meaneth:

Thou, O Lord, in tender love

Dost all my burdens bear;

Lift my heart to things above,

And fix it ever there.

Calm on tumult's wheel I sit:

Midst busy multitudes alone,

Sweetly waiting at thy feet,

Till all thy will be done.

6. But the grand objection is still behind. "We appeal, say they, to Experience. Our light did shine: we used outward things many years: and yet they profited nothing. We attended on all the ordinances: but we were no better for it; nor indeed

deed any one else: nay we were the worse. For we fancied ourselves Christians for so doing, when we knew not what Christianity meant."

I allow the fact. I allow that you and ten thousand more have thus abused the ordinances of God: mistaking the means for the end: supposing that the doing these, or some other outward works, either was the Religion of Jesus Christ, or would be accepted in the place of it. But let the abuse be taken away and the use remain. Now use all outward things; but use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.

7. But this is not all. They affirm, "Experience likewise shews, That the trying to do good is but lost labour: what does it avail to feed or clothe men's bodies, if they are just dropping into everlasting fire? And what good can any man do to their souls? If these are changed, God doth it himself. Besides, all men are either good, at least desirous so to be, or obstinately evil. Now the former have no need of us. Let them ask help of God, and it shall be given them. And the latter will receive no help from us. Nay, and our Lord forbids, to *cast our pearls before swine.*"

I answer, 1. Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire. 2. Though it is God only changes hearts, yet he generally doth it by man. It is our part to do all that in us lies, as diligently as if we could change them ourselves, and then to leave the event to him. 3. God in answer to their prayers, builds up his children by each other in every good gift; nourishing and strengthening the whole "body, by that which every joint supplieth." So that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee;" no, nor even "the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Lastly, How are
you

you assured, that the persons before you are dogs or swine? Judge them not, until you have tried. "How knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest gain thy brother?" But thou mayest, under God, save his soul from death? When he spurns thy love and blasphemes the good word, then it is time to give him up to God.

8. "We have tried. We have laboured to reform sinners. And what did it avail? On many we could make no impression at all: and if some were changed for awhile, yet their goodness was but as the morning dew; and they were soon as bad, nay worse than ever. So that we only hurt them—and ourselves too: for our minds were hurried and discomposed: perhaps filled with anger instead of love. Therefore we had better have kept our Religion to ourselves."

It is very possible this fact also may be true: that you have tried to do good and have not succeeded: yea, that those who seemed reformed, relapsed into sin, and their last state was worse than the first. And what marvel? Is the servant above his Master? But how often did he strive to save sinners: and they would not hear: or when they had followed him a while, they turned back as a dog to his vomit. But he did not therefore desist from striving to do good: no more should you, whatever your success be. It is your part, to do as you are commanded: the event is in the hand of God. You are not accountable for this: leave it to him, who orders all things well. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy had; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper," Eccles. xi. 6.

"But the trial hurries and frets your own soul." Perhaps it did so for this very reason, because you thought you was accountable for the event, which no man is, nor indeed can be. Or perhaps, because you was off your guard; you was not watchful over your own spirit. But this is no reason for

disobeying God. Try again; but try more warily than before. Do good (as you forgive) "not seven times only; but until seventy times seven." Only be wiser by experience: attempt it every time more cautiously than before. Be more humbled before God, more deeply convinced, that of yourself you can do nothing. Be more jealous over your own spirit: more gentle and watchful unto prayer. Thus "cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it again after many days."

IV. 1. Notwithstanding all these plausible pretences for hiding it, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This is the practical Application which our Lord himself makes of the foregoing Considerations.

"Let your light so shine"—Your lowliness of heart, your gentleness and meekness of wisdom: your serious, weighty concern for the things of eternity, and sorrow for the sins and miseries of men: your earnest desire of universal holiness and full happiness in God: your tender good-will to all mankind, and fervent love to your supreme Benefactor. Endeavour not to conceal this light, wherewith God hath enlightened your soul: but let it *shine before men*, before all with whom you are, in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let it shine still more eminently in your actions, in your doing all possible good to all men: and in your suffering for righteousness-sake, while you "rejoice and are exceeding glad, knowing that great is your reward in heaven."

2. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works: so far let a Christian be from ever designing, or desiring to conceal his Religion. On the contrary, let it be your desire, not to conceal it; not to put the *light under a bushel*. Let it be your care, to place it "on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that

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are in the house." Only take heed, not to seek your own praise herein, not to desire any honour to yourselves. But let it be your sole aim that all, who see your good works, may "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. Be this your one ultimate end in all things. With this view, be plain, open, undisguised. Let your love be without dissimulation; why should you hide fair, disinterested love? Let there be no guile found in your mouth: let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. Let there be no darkness or reservedness in your conversation, no disguise in your behaviour. Leave this to those who have other designs in view; designs which will not bear the light. Be ye artless and simple to all mankind; that all may see the grace of God which is in you. And although some will harden their hearts, yet others will take knowledge, that ye have been with Jesus, and by returning themselves "to the great Bishop of their souls, glorify your Father which is in heaven."

4. With this one design, that men may glorify God in you, go on in his name, and in the power of his might. Be not ashamed, even to stand alone, so it be in the ways of God. Let the light which is in your heart, shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy. And in order to enlarge your ability of doing good, renounce all superfluities. Cut off all unnecessary expence, in food, in furniture, in apparel. Be a good steward of every gift of God, even of these his lowest gifts. Cut off all unnecessary expence of time, all needless or useless employments. And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." In a word, be thou full of faith and love: do good: suffer evil. And herein be thou "steadfast, unmoveable: yea, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as thou knowest that thy labour is not in vain in the Lord."

S E R M O N XXIV.

DISCOURSE the Fifth on our LORD'S
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

" Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

" For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

" Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven ; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

" For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

1. **A**MONG the multitude of reproaches which fell upon him who *was despised and rejected of men*, it could not fail to be one, That he was a Teacher of novelties, an Introducer of a *new Religion*. This might be affirmed with the more colour, because many of the expressions he had used, were not common among the Jews : either they did not use them at all, or not in the same sense, not in so full and strong a meaning. Add to this, that the worshipping God *in spirit and in truth*, must always appear a new Religion, to those who have hitherto known nothing but *outside worship*, nothing but the *form of godliness*.

2. And

2. And it is not improbable, some might hope it was so : that he was abolishing the old Religion, and bringing in another ; one which they might flatter themselves, would be an easier way to heaven. But our Lord refutes in these words both the vain hopes of the one, and the groundless calumnies of the other.

I shall consider them in the same order as they lie, taking each verse for a distinct head of Discourse.

I. 1. And, first, " Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."

The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve and utterly abolish. To this bear all the Apostles witness : not only Barnabas and Paul, who vehemently withstood those who taught, That Christians * " ought to keep the law of Moses :" not only St. Peter, who termed the insisting on this, on the observance of the ritual law, a † " tempting God, and putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, saith he, nor we were able to bear ; but all the Apostles, elders and brethren, being assembled with one accord," declared ; That to command them to keep this law, was to § " subvert their souls : and that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, to lay no such burthen upon them. This handwriting of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away and nail to his cross."

2. But the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he did not take away. It was not the design of his coming, to revoke any part of this. This is a law, which never can be broken, which " stands fast as

* Acts xv. 6. † Acts xv. 10. § Ver. 24.

the faithful witness in heaven." The moral stands on an entirely different foundation, from the ceremonial or ritual law; which was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiff-necked people: whereas this was from the beginning of the world; being *written not on tables of stone*, but on the hearts of all the children of men, when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And however the letters once wrote by the finger of God, are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they not wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of this law must remain in force, upon all mankind, and in all ages: as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change; but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

3. "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." Some have conceived our Lord to mean, I am come to fulfil this, by my entire and perfect obedience to it. And it cannot be doubted but he did, in this sense, fulfil every part of it. But this does not appear to be what he intends here, being foreign to the scope of his present discourse. Without question his meaning in this place is, (consistently with all that goes before and follows after) *I am come* to establish it in its fulness, in spite of all the glosses of men. I am come to place in a full and clear view, whatsoever was dark or obscure therein. I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it: to shew the length and breadth, the entire extent of every commandment contained therein: and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.

4. And this our Lord has abundantly performed in the preceding and subsequent parts of the discourse before us: in which he has not introduced a new Religion into the world, but the same which
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was from the beginning: a Religion, the substance of which is without question, "as old as the creation;" being coeval with man, and having proceeded from God, at the very time when *man became a living soul*: (the substance, I say, for some circumstances of it, now relate to man as a fallen creature.) A Religion witnessed to both by the law, and by the prophets in all succeeding generations. Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great Author of it himself, condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it: at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.

II. 1. "For verily I say unto you" (a solemn preface, which denotes both the importance and certainty of what is spoken) "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

One jot—It is literally, *not one iota*, not the most inconsiderable vowel, or *one tittle*, *μία κεφαλαία*, one corner or point of a consonant. It is a proverbial expression, which signifies that no one commandment contained in the moral law, nor the least part of any one, however inconsiderable it might seem, should ever be disannulled.

"Shall in no wise pass from the law:" ἡ μὴ παρῇ ἰδοῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου. The double negative here used, strengthens the sense, so as to admit of no contradiction. And the word *παρῇ*, it may be observed, is not barely *future*; declaring what *will* be: but has likewise the force of an *imperative*; ordering what *shall* be. It is a word of authority, expressing the sovereign will and power of him that spake: of him whose word is the law of heaven and earth, and stands fast for ever and ever.

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass, till heaven and earth pass;" or as it is expressed immediately

mediately after, *ἵνα ἡ πάντα πληρωθῇ* till all, (or rather all things) be fulfilled, till the consummation of all things. Here is therefore no room for that poor evasion (with which some have delighted themselves greatly) That "no part of the law was to pass away, till all the law was fulfilled: but it has been fulfilled by Christ; and therefore now must pass for the gospel to be established." Not so; the word *all* does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe; as neither has the term *fulfilled*, any reference to the law, but to all things in heaven and earth.

2. From all this we may learn, That there is no contrariety at all, between the law and the gospel; that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing the gospel. Indeed neither of them supercedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel: if they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law; if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel: the gospel being no other than the commands of the law, proposed by way of promises. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

3. There is therefore the closest connexion that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to the gospel: on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbour, to be meek, humble or lowly: we feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that *with man this is impossible*.

possible. But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble; meek and lowly. We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith: and *the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us*, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We may yet farther observe, That every command in holy Writ, is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, "This is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts." God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to *pray without ceasing*? To *rejoice evermore*? To be *holy as he is holy*? It is enough. He will work in us this very thing. It shall be unto us according to his word.

4. But if these things are so, we cannot be at a loss, what to think of those who in all ages of the Church, have undertaken to change or supercede some commands of God, as they professed, by the peculiar direction of his Spirit. Christ has here given us an infallible rule, whereby to judge of all such pretensions. Christianity, as it includes the whole moral law of God, both by way of injunction and of promise, if we will hear him, is designed of God, to be the last of all his dispensations. There is no other to come after this. This is to endure till the consummation of all things. Of consequence all such new revelations, are of Satan, and not of God; and all pretences to another more perfect dispensation, fall to the ground of course. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but *this word shall not pass away.*"

III. 1. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the

the same shall he called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Who, what are they then, that make "The preaching of the law," a character of reproach? Do they not see on whom the reproach must fall? On whose head it must light at last? Whosoever on this ground despiseth us, despiseth him that sent us. For did ever any man preach the law like him? Even when he came, "not to condemn but to save the world." When he came purposely to "bring life and immortality to light through the gospel?" Can any "preach the law" more expressly, more rigorously, than Christ does in these words? And who is he that shall amend them? Who is he that shall instruct the Son of God, how to preach? Who will teach him a better way of delivering the message which he hath received of the Father?

1. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments," or one of the least of these commandments—*These commandments*, we may observe, is a term used by our Lord as equivalent with *the law*: or *the law and the Prophets*, which is the same thing, seeing the prophets added nothing to the law; but only declared, explained, or enforced it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

"Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments."—especially if it be done wilfully or presumptuously:—*one*—for "he that keepeth the whole law and [thus] offends in one point, is guilty of all:" the wrath of God abideth on him; as surely as if he had broken every one. So that no allowance is made for one darling lust; no reserve for one idol; no excuse for refraining from all besides, and only giving way to one bosom sin. What God demands is, an entire obedience; we are to have an eye to all his commandments: otherwise we lose all the labour we take in keeping some, and our poor souls for ever and ever.

One of these the least, or one of the least of these *commandments*.—Here is another excuse cut off, whereby many, who cannot deceive God, miserably deceive their own souls. "This sin, saith the sinner, is it not a little one? Will not the Lord spare me in this thing? Surely he will not be extreme to mark this, since I do not offend in the greater matters of the law." Vain hope! Speaking after the manner of men, we may term these great and those little commandments. But in reality, they are not so. If we use propriety of speech, there is no such thing as a little sin; every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront on the great Majesty of heaven.

3. *And shall teach men so*—In some sense it may be said, that whosoever openly breaks any commandment, teaches others to do the same: for example speaks, and many times louder than precept. In this sense it is apparent every open drunkard, is a teacher of drunkenness; every sabbath-breaker is constantly teaching his neighbour, to profane the day of the Lord. But this is not all; an habitual breaker of the law, is seldom content to stop here. He generally teaches other men to do so too, by word as well as example: especially when he hardens his neck, and hateth to be reprov'd. Such a sinner soon commences an advocate for sin: he defends what he is resolved not to forsake. He excuses the sin which he will not leave, and thus directly teaches every sin which he commits.

"He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven:" that is, shall have no part therein. He is a stranger to the kingdom of heaven which is on earth; he hath no portion in that inheritance; no share of that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Nor by consequence can he have any part, in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. But if those who even thus *break and teach* others to break, "one of the least of these commandments,

mandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven," shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God; if even these shall be cast into "outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth:" then where will they appear, whom our Lord chiefly and primarily intends in these words? They who bearing the character of Teachers sent from God, do nevertheless themselves break his commandments, yea and openly teach others so to do; being corrupt both in life and doctrine.

5. These are of several sorts. Of the first sort are they, who live in some wilful, habitual sin. Now if an ordinary sinner teaches by his example, how much more a sinful Minister? Even if he does not attempt to defend, excuse or extenuate his sin. If he does, he is a murderer indeed, yea, the murderer-general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the Prince of darkness. When he goes hence, "hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming." Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him.

6. Next to these are the good-natured, good sort of men: who live an easy, harmless life, neither troubling themselves with outward sin, nor with inward holiness: men who are remarkable neither one way nor the other; neither for religion nor irreligion: who are very regular both in public and private; but do not pretend to be any stricter than their neighbours. A Minister of this kind breaks, not one, or a few only of the least commandments of God; but all the great and weighty branches of his law, which relate to the power of godliness: and all that require us to "pass the time of our sojourning in fear," to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" to have our "loins always girt and our lights burning;" to "strive or agonize to enter in at the strait-gate." And he *teaches men so*, by the whole form of his life, and the general tenor of his preaching, which uniformly

uniformly tends to sooth those in their pleasing dream, who imagine themselves Christians and are not; to persuade all who attend upon his ministry, to sleep on and take their rest. No marvel therefore if both he and they that follow him, wake together in everlasting burnings.

7. But above all these in the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ, are they who openly and explicitly *judge the law* itself, and *speakevil of the law*: who teach men to break (*λύσαι* to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least, or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke: who teach, without any cover, in so many words, "What did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it." "There is but one duty, which is that of believing." "All commands are unfit for our times." "From any demand of the law no man is obliged now to go one step, to give away one farthing, to eat or omit one morsel." This is indeed carrying matters with a high hand. This is withstanding our Lord to the face, and telling him, That he understood not how to deliver the message on which he was sent. — O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!

8. The most surprising of all the circumstances, that attend this strong delusion, is that they who are given up to it, really believe, that they honour Christ, by overthrowing his law, and that they are magnifying his office, while they are destroying his doctrine! Yea, they honour him just as Judas did, when he said, "Hail Master, and kissed him." And he may as justly say, to every one of them, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" It is no other than betraying him with a kiss, to talk of his blood and take away his crown: to set light by any part of his law, under pretence of advancing his gospel. Nor indeed can any one escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner

as either directly or indirectly tends, to set aside any branch of obedience: who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in anywise the least of the commandments of God.

9. It is impossible indeed to have too high an esteem for *the faith of God's elect*. And we must all declare, "By grace ye are saved through faith:—not of works, lest any man should boast." We must cry aloud to every penitent sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But at the same time we must take care to let all men know, we esteem no faith but that *which worketh by love*: and that we are not *saved by faith*, unless so far as we are delivered from the power as well as the guilt of sin. And when we say, "Believe and thou shalt be saved;" we do not mean, "Believe and thou shalt step from sin to heaven: without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness:" but, Believe and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace and power together. Thou shalt have power from him in whom thou believest, to trample sin under thy feet; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve him with all thy strength. Thou shalt have power, "by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory and honour and immortality." Thou shalt both *do and teach* all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest. Thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so "be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

IV. 1. Whatever other way we teach to the kingdom of heaven, to glory, honour and immortality, be it called The way of Faith, or by any other name, it is in truth, The way to destruction. It will not bring a man peace at the last. For thus saith the Lord, "Verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of
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the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The Scribes, mentioned so often in the New Testament as some of the most constant and vehement opposers of our Lord, were not secretaries, or men employed in writing only, as that term might incline us to believe. Neither were they Lawyers, in our common sense of the word (although the word *νομικοι* is so rendered in our translation.) Their employment had no affinity at all, to that of a Lawyer among us. They were conversant with the laws of God, and not with the laws of man. These were their study: it was their proper and peculiar business, to read and expound the law and the prophets: particularly in the synagogues. They were the ordinary, stated Preachers among the Jews. So that if the sense of the original word was attended to, we might render it, the Divines. For these were the men that made Divinity their profession; and they were generally (as their name literally imports) Men of Letters; men of the greatest account for learning that were then in the Jewish nation.

2. The Pharisees were a very ancient sect, or body of men, among the Jews: originally so called from the Hebrew word *פָּרִישׁ*, which signifies to separate or divide. Not that they made any formal separation from, or division in the national Church. They were only distinguished from others, by greater strictness of life, by more exactness of conversation. For they were zealous of the law in the minutest points: paying tithes of mint, anise, cummin. And hence they were had in honour of all the people, and generally esteemed the holiest of men.

Many of the Scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees. Thus St. Paul himself, who was educated for a Scribe, first at the University of Tarsus, and after that in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel (one of the most learned Scribes or Doctors of the

Law that were then in the nation) declares of himself before the council, * “I am a Pharisee the son of a Pharisee :” and before King Agrippa, † “after the strictest sect of our Religion I lived a Pharisee.” And the whole body of the Scribes generally esteemed and acted in concert with the Pharisees. Hence we find our Saviour so frequently coupling them together, as coming in many respects under the same consideration. In this place they seem to be mentioned together, as the most eminent professors of Religion: the former of whom were accounted the wisest, the latter the holiest of men.

3. What *the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees* really was, it is not difficult to determine. Our Lord has preserved an authentic account, which one of them gave of himself. And he is clear and full in describing his own righteousness; and cannot be supposed to have omitted any part of it. He *went up indeed into the temple to pray*; but was so intent upon his own virtues, that he forgot the design upon which he came. For it is remarkable, he does not properly pray at all. He only tells God, how wise and good he was. “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers! or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” His righteousness therefore consisted of three parts, first, faith he, “I am not as other men are.” I am not an *extortioner*, not *unjust*, not an *adulterer*; not even *us this publican*. Secondly, *I fast twice in the week*; and thirdly, *Give tithes of all that I possess*.

“I am not as other men are.” This is not a small point. It is not every man that can say this. It is as if he had said, I do not suffer myself to be carried away by that great torrent, Custom. I live not by custom, but by Reason; not by the examples of men, but by the word of God. “I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer:”

* Acts xxiii. 6. † Chap. xxvi. 5.

however common these sins are, even among those who are called the people of God: (extortion, in particular, a kind of legal injustice; not punishable by any human law, the making gain of another's ignorance or necessity, having filled every corner of the land;) "nor even as this publican;" not guilty of any open or presumptuous sin; not an outward sinner; but a fair, honest man, of blameless life and conversation.

4. "I fast twice in the week." There is more implied in this, than we may at first be sensible of. All the stricter Pharisees observed the weekly fasts; namely, every Monday and Thursday. On the former day, they fasted in memory of Moses receiving on that day (as their tradition taught) the two tables of stone written by the finger of God; on the latter, in memory of his casting them out of his hand, when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. On these days, they took no sustenance at all, till three in the afternoon; the hour at which they began to offer up the evening sacrifice in the temple. Till that hour it was their custom to remain in the temple, in some of the corners, apartments, or courts thereof; that they might be ready to assist at all the sacrifices, and to join in all the public prayers. The time between, they were accustomed to employ, partly in private addresses to God, partly in searching the Scriptures, in reading the Law and the Prophets, and in meditating thereon. Thus much is implied in, *I fast twice in the week*, the second branch of the righteousness of a Pharisee.

5. "I give tithes of all that I possess." This the Pharisees did with the utmost exactness. They would not except the most inconsiderable thing, no, not mint, anise and cummin. They would not keep back the least part of what they believed properly to belong to God; but gave a full tenth of their whole substance yearly, and of all their increase, whatsoever it was.

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Yea, the stricter Pharisees (as has been often observed, by those who are versed in the ancient Jewish writings) not content with giving one tenth of their substance to God, in his Priests and Levites, gave another tenth to God in the poor, and that continually. They gave the same proportion of all they had in alms, as they were accustomed to give in tithes. And this likewise they adjusted with the utmost exactness, that they might not keep back any part, but might fully render unto God the things which were God's, as they accounted this to be. So that, upon the whole, they gave away, from year to year, an entire fifth of all that they possessed.

6. This was *the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*: a righteousness, which in many respects, went far beyond the conception which many have been accustomed to entertain concerning it. But perhaps, it will be said, It was all false and feigned; for they were all a company of hypocrites. —Some of them doubtless were; men who had really no Religion at all; no fear of God, or desire to please him: who had no concern for the honour that cometh of God, but only for the praise of men. And these are they whom our Lord so severely condemns, so sharply reproves on many occasions. But we must not suppose, Because many Pharisees were hypocrites, therefore all were so. Nor indeed is hypocrisy by any means essential to the character of a Pharisee. This is not the distinguishing mark of their sect. It is rather this, (according to our Lord's account) "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." This is their genuine badge. But the Pharisee of this kind cannot be an hypocrite. He must be, in the common sense, sincere; otherwise he could not *trust in himself that he is righteous*. The man who was here commending himself to God, unquestionably thought himself righteous. Consequently, he was no hypocrite: he was

was not conscious to himself of any insincerity. He now spoke to God just what he thought, that he was abundantly better than other men.

But the example of St. Paul, were there no other, is sufficient, to put this out of all question. He could not only say, when he was a Christian, * "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men:" but even concerning the time when he was a Pharisee; † "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." He was therefore sincere when he was a Pharisee, as well as when he was a Christian. He was no more an hypocrite when he persecuted the Church, than when he preached the faith which once he persecuted. Let this then be added to *the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, a sincere belief that they are righteous, and in all things *doing God service*.

7. And yet, "Except your righteousness, saith our Lord, shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." A solemn and weighty declaration! And which it behoves all who are called by the name of Christ, seriously and deeply to consider. But before we enquire, How our righteousness may exceed theirs, let us examine, whether at present we come up to it?

First. A Pharisee was *not as other men are*. In externals he was singularly good. Are we so? Do we dare to be singular at all? Do we not rather swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with Religion and Reason together, because we would not *look particular*? Are we not often more afraid of being out of the fashion, than being out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide? To run counter to the world? "To obey God rather than man?" Otherwise the

* Acts xxiv. 16. † Chap. xxiii. 1.

Pharisee leaves us behind at the very first step. It is well if we overtake him any more.

But, to come closer, Can we use his first plea with God, which is in substance, "I do no harm, I live in no outward sin; I do nothing, for which my own heart condemns me." Do you not? Are you sure of that? Do you live in no practice, for which your own heart condemns you? If you are not an adulterer, if you are not unchaste, either in word or deed, are you not unjust? The grand measure of Justice, as well as of Mercy, is, Do unto others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee. Do you walk by this rule? Do you never do unto any what you would not they should do unto you? Nay, are you not grossly unjust? Are you not an extortioner? Do you not make a gain of any one's ignorance or necessity? Neither in buying nor selling? Suppose ye were engaged in trade, Do you demand, do you receive no more than the real value of what you sell? Do you demand, do you receive no more of the ignorant than of the knowing; of a little child, than of an experienced trader? If you do, why does not your heart condemn you? You are a barefaced extortioner. Do you demand no more than the usual price of the goods, of any who is in pressing want? Who must have, and that without delay, the things which you can only furnish them with? If you do, this also is flat extortion. Indeed you do not come up to the righteousness of a Pharisee.

8. A Pharisee, secondly (to express his sense in our common way) used all the means of grace. As he fasted *often and much, twice in every week*, so he attended all the sacrifices. He was constant in public and private prayer, and in reading and hearing the scriptures. Do you go as far as this? Do you fast *much and often*? Twice in the week? I fear not. Once at least: "on all Fridays in the year?" (So our Church clearly and peremptorily enjoins all her members to do: to observe all these,

as well as the Vigils and the forty days of Lent, as "days of fasting or abstinence.") Do you fast twice in the year? I am afraid, some among us cannot plead even this!—Do you neglect no opportunity of attending and partaking of the Christian sacrifice? How many are they, who call themselves Christians, and yet are utterly regardless of it? Yet do not eat of that bread, or drink of that cup, for months, perhaps years together? Do you every day, either hear the Scriptures, or read them and meditate thereon? Do you join in prayer with the great congregation? Daily, if you have opportunity: if not whenever you can, particularly, on that day, which you *remember to keep it holy*? Do you strive to *make opportunities*? Are you *glad when they say unto you*, "We will go into the house of the Lord?" Are you zealous of, and diligent in private prayer? Do you suffer no day to pass without it? Rather, are not some of you so far, from spending therein (with the Pharisee) several hours in one day, that you think one hour full enough, if not too much? Do you spend an hour in a day, or in a week, in praying to your Father which is in secret? Yea, an hour in a month? Have you spent one hour together in private prayer ever since you was born? Ah poor Christian! Shall not the Pharisee rise up in the judgment against thee and condemn thee? His righteousness is as far above thine, as the heaven is above the earth.

9. The Pharisee, thirdly, *paid tithes* and gave alms *of all that he possesseth*. And in how ample a manner? So that he was (as we phrase it) "a man that did much good." Do we come up to him here? Which of us is so abundant as he was, in good works? Which of us gives a fifth of all his substance to God? Both of the principal, and of the increase? Who of us, out of (suppose) an hundred pounds a year, gives twenty to God and the poor, out of fifty ten; and so in a larger or a smaller

smaller proportion? When shall our righteousness, in using all the means of grace, in attending all the ordinances of God, in avoiding evil, and doing good, equal at least the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?

10. Although if it only equalled theirs, what would that profit? "For verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." But how can it exceed theirs? Wherein does the righteousness of a Christian exceed that of a Scribe or Pharisee.

Christian righteousness exceed theirs, first, in the extent of it. Most of the Pharisees, though they were rigorously exact in many things, yet were emboldened by the traditions of the Elders to dispense with others of equal importance. Thus they were extremely punctual in keeping the fourth commandment: they would not even *rub an ear of corn* on the sabbath-day: but not at all in keeping the third, making little account of light, or even false-swearing. So that their righteousness was partial: whereas the righteousness of a real Christian is universal. He does not observe one, or some parts of the law of God, and neglect the rest; but keeps all his commandments, loves them all, values them above gold or precious stones.

11. It may be indeed, that some of the Scribes and Pharisees, endeavoured to keep all the commandments, and consequently were, as touching the righteousness of the law, that is, according to the letter of it, blameless. But still the righteousness of a Christian exceeds all this righteousness of a Scribe or Pharisee, by fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the law, by inward as well as outward obedience. In this, in the spirituality of it, it admits of no comparison. This is the point which our Lord has so largely proved, in the whole tenor of this discourse. Their righteousness was external only; Christian righteousness is in the inner

ner man. The Pharisee "cleansed the outside of the cup and the platter;" the Christian is clean within. The Pharisee laboured to present God with a good life; the Christian with a holy heart. The one shook off the leaves, perhaps the fruits of sin; the other *lays the axe to the root*: as not being content with the outward form of godliness, how exact soever it be, unless the life, the spirit, the power of God unto salvation, be felt in the inmost soul.

Thus, to do no harm, to do good, to attend the ordinances of God, (the righteousness of a Pharisee) are all external: whereas, on the contrary, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbour, and purity of heart, (the righteousness of a Christian) are all internal. And even peace-making (or doing good) and suffering for righteousness sake, stand intitled to the blessings annexed to them, only as they imply these inward dispositions, as they spring from, exercise and confirm them. So that whereas the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external only, it may be said, in some sense, that the righteousness of a Christian is internal only: all his actions and sufferings being as nothing in themselves, being estimated before God only by the tempers from which they spring.

12. Whosoever therefore thou art, who bearest the holy and venerable name of a Christian, see, first that thy righteousness fall not short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Be *not* thou *as other men are*. Dare to stand alone, to be, "Against Example, singularly good." If thou *follow a multitude* at all, it must be, *to do evil*. Let not Custom or Fashion be thy guide; but Reason and Religion. The practice of others is nothing to thee: "every man must give an account of himself to God." Indeed if thou canst save the soul of another, do: but at least, save one, thy own. Walk not in the path of death, because

it is broad, and many walk therein. Nay, by this very token thou mayest know it. Is the way wherein thou now walkest, a broad, well-frequented, fashionable way? Then it infallibly leads to destruction. O be not thou "damned for company;" cease from evil; fly from sin as from the face of a serpent. At least, do no harm. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Be not thou found in that number. Touching outward sins, surely the grace of God is even now sufficient for thee. "Herein, (at least,) exercise thyself to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men."

Secondly. Let not thy righteousness fall short of theirs, with regard to the ordinances of God. If thy labour or bodily strength will not allow of thy fasting *twice in the week*, however deal faithfully with thy own soul, and fast as often as thy strength will permit. Omit no public, no private opportunity, of pouring out thy soul in prayer. Neglect no occasion of eating that bread and drinking that cup, which is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Be diligent in searching the Scriptures; read as thou mayest, and meditate therein day and night. Rejoice to embrace every opportunity, of hearing "the word of reconciliation declared by the Ambassadors of Christ, the Stewards of the mysteries of God. In using all the means of grace, in a constant and careful attendance on every ordinance of God, live up to (at least, till thou canst go beyond) the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees."

Thirdly. Fall not short of a Pharisee in doing good. Give alms of all thou dost possess. Is any hungry? Feed him. Is he athirst? Give him drink. Naked? Cover him with a garment. If thou hast this world's goods, do not limit thy beneficence to a scanty proportion. Be merciful to the uttermost of thy power. Why not, even as a Pharisee? Now *make thyself friends*, while the
time

time is, *of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when thou failest, when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they may receive thee into everlasting habitations.*

13. But rest not here. Let thy *righteousness* "exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." Be not thou content, to "keep the whole law, and offend in one point. Hold thou fast all his commandments, and all false ways do thou utterly abhor." Do all the things, whatsoever he hath commanded, and that with all thy might. Thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, though without him thou canst do nothing.

Above all, let thy righteousness exceed theirs in the purity and spirituality of it. What is the exactest form of Religion to thee? The most perfect outside righteousness? Go thou higher and deeper than all this. Let thy Religion be the Religion of the heart. Be thou poor in spirit; little and base and mean and vile in thy own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust at the love of God which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. Be serious: let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words and works, be such as flows from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulph, that thou and all the children of men, are just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory, or everlasting burnings. Be meek: let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering toward all men: at the same time that all which is in thee is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit, do and suffer all things. Thus *exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and thou shalt be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

S E R M O N XXV.

DISCOURSE the SIXTH, on our LORD's
SERMON on the MOUNT.

MATTHEW VI. 1—15.

- “ Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
- “ Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have praise of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.
- “ But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.
- “ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.
- “ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.
- “ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
- “ Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before you ask him.

“ After

- " After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
- " For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :
- " But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

1. **I**N the preceding chapter our Lord has described inward Religion, in its various branches. He has laid before us those dispositions of soul, which constitute real Christianity: the inward tempers contained in that Holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord*; the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. He proceeds to shew in this chapter, How all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy and good and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are in his sight of great price.

2. The necessity of this purity of intention, he shews first, with regard to those, which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such, when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed works of Piety; the rest, works of Charity or Mercy. Of the latter sort, he particularly names Almsgiving; of the former, Prayer and Fasting. But the directions

given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of Charity or Mercy.

I. 1. And first, with regard to works of Mercy. "Take heed, saith he, that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." Take heed "that ye do not your alms." Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, every thing which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited, whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted; the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.

2. "Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them." The thing which is here forbidden, is not, barely the doing good in the sight of men: this circumstance alone, that others see what we do, makes the action neither worse nor better: but the doing it before men, *to be seen of them*; with this view, from this intention only. I say, from *this intention only*; for this may, in some cases be a part of our intention; we may design that some of our actions should be seen, and yet they may be acceptable to God. We may intend, that our *light* should *shine before men*, when our conscience bears us witness, in the Holy Ghost, that our ultimate end in designing they should see our good works, is, *That they may glorify our Father which is in heaven*. But take heed that ye do not the least thing with a view to your own glory. Take heed, that a regard to the praise of men, have no place at all in your works of mercy. If ye seek your own glory, if you have any design

to gain the honour that cometh of men, whatever is done with this view is nothing worth; it is not done unto the Lord; he accepteth it not; *ye have no reward for this of your Father which is in heaven.*

3. "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have praise of men." The word *Synagogue* does not here mean, a place of worship, but any place of public resort, such as the Market-place or Exchange. It was a common thing among the Jews, who were men of large fortunes, particularly among the Pharisees, to cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the most public parts of the city, when they were about to give any considerable alms. The pretended reason for this was, To call the poor together to receive it: but the real design, that they might have praise of men.— But be not thou like unto them. Do not thou cause a trumpet to be sounded before thee. Use no ostentation in doing good. Aim at the honour which cometh of God only. *They who seek the praise of men, have their reward. They shall have no praise of God.*

4. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." This is a proverbial expression, the meaning of which is, Do it in as secret a manner as is possible: as secret as is consistent with the doing it at all; (for it must not be left undone: omit no opportunity of doing good, whether secretly or openly:) and with the doing it in the most effectual manner. For here is also an exception to be made. When you are fully persuaded in your own mind, that by your not concealing the good which is done, either you will yourself be enabled, or others excited to do the more good, then you may not conceal it: then let your light appear, and *shine to all that are in the house.* But unless where the glory of God and

the good of mankind oblige you to the contrary act in as private and unobserved a manner, as the nature of the thing will admit; "that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly." Perhaps in the present world; many instances of this stand recorded in all ages: but infallibly in the world to come, before the general assembly of men and angels.

II. 1. From works of Charity or Mercy, our Lord proceeds to those which are termed works of Piety. "And when thou prayest, saith he, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." Hypocrisy then, or insincerity, is the first thing we are to guard against in Prayer. Beware not to speak what thou dost not mean. Prayer is, the lifting up of the heart to God: all words of prayer without this are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design, to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out thy soul before him. *Not as the hypocrites, who love, or are wont, to pray standing in the Synagogues, the Exchange or Market-places, and in the corners of the streets, wherever the most people are, that they may be seen of men:* this was the sole design, the motive and end, of the prayers which they there repeated. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They are to expect none from your Father which is in heaven.

2. But it is not only, the having an eye to the praise of men, which cuts us off from any reward in heaven; which leaves us no room to expect the blessing of God, upon our works whether of Piety or Mercy. Purity of intention is equally destroyed by a view to any temporal reward whatever. If we repeat our prayers, if we attend the
public

public worship of God, if we relieve the poor, with a view to gain or interest, it is not a whit more acceptable to God, than if it were done with a view to praise. Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of men, for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear to men, an abomination unto the Lord.

3. "But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." There is a time, when thou art openly to glorify God, to pray and praise him in the great congregation. But when thou desirest more largely and more particularly to make thy requests known unto God, whether it be in the evening, or in the morning, or at noon-day, "enter into thy closet and shut the door." Use all the privacy thou canst. (Only leave it not undone, whether thou hast any closet, any privacy or no. Pray to God if it be possible, when none seeth but he; but if otherwise, pray to God.) Thus "pray to thy Father which is in secret:" pour out all thy heart before him. "And thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly."

4. *But when ye pray, even in secret, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do, Μὴ Βασιλογησῆτε.* Do not use abundance of words without any meaning. Say not the same thing over and over again; think not the fruit of your prayers depends on the length of them; like the Heathens: for *they think they shall be heard, for their much speaking.*

The thing here reprov'd, is not simply the length, no more than the shortness of our prayers: but, first, length without meaning; the speaking much, and meaning little or nothing: the using (not all repetitions; for our Lord himself prayed thrice, repeating the same words; but vain repetitions, as the Heathens did, reciting the names of
their

their gods over and over : as they do among Christians, (vulgarly so called) and not among the Papists only, who say over and over the same string of prayers, without ever feeling what they speak : secondly, the thinking to be heard for our much speaking, the fancying God measures prayers for their length, and is best pleased with those which contain the most words, which sound the longest in his ears. These are such instances of superstition and folly, as all who are named by the name of Christ, should leave to the Heathens, to them on whom the glorious light of the gospel hath never shined.

5. "Be not ye therefore like unto them." Ye who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are thoroughly convinced, "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." So that the end of your praying, is not to inform God, as though he knew not your wants already ; but rather to inform yourselves, to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependance on him, who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give than you to ask ; as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive, the good things he has prepared for you.

III. 1. After having taught the true nature and ends of Prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it : even that divine form of prayer, which seems in this place to be proposed by way of pattern chiefly, as the model and standard of all our prayers ; "after this manner therefore pray ye." Whereas elsewhere he enjoins the use of these very words, * "He said unto them, when ye pray, say."

2. We may observe in general concerning this divine prayer. First, That it contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. There is

* Luke xi. 2.

nothing

nothing which we have need to ask of God, nothing which we can ask without offending him, which is not included either directly or indirectly in this comprehensive from : secondly, That it contains all we can reasonably or innocently desire ; whatever is for the glory of God, whatever is needful or profitable not only for ourselves, but for every creature in heaven and earth. And indeed our prayers are the proper test of our desires ; nothing being fit to have a place in our desires, which is not fit to have a place in our prayers ; what we may not pray for, neither should we desire : thirdly, That it contains all our duty to God and man : whatsoever things are pure and holy, whatsoever God requires of the children of men, whatsoever is acceptable in his sight, whatsoever it is whereby we may profit our neighbour, being expressed or implied therein.

3. It consists of three parts, the preface, the petitions, and the doxology or conclusion. The preface, " Our Father which art in heaven," lays a general foundation for prayer ; comprizing what we must first know of God, before we can pray, in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us all those tempers, with which we are to approach to God, which are most essentially requisite, if we desire either our prayers or our lives should find acceptance with him.

4. "*Our Father.*" If he is a Father, then he is good, then he is loving to his children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. God is willing to bless ; let us ask for a blessing. "*Our Father,*"—Our Creator ; the Author of our being ; who raised us from the dust of the earth, who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls. But if he made us, let us ask and he will not withhold any good thing from the work of his own hands. "*Our Father,*"—Our Preserver ; who day by day sustains the life he has given : of whose continuing love we now and every

every moment receive life and breath, and all things. So much the more boldly let us come to him, and *we* shall “find mercy and grace to help in time of need.” Above all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in him: who justifies us “freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus:” who hath “blotted out all our sins, and healed all our infirmities;” who hath received us for *his own children, by adoption and grace*, and “because we are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father: who hath begotten us again of incorruptible seed, and createth us anew in Christ Jesus.” Therefore we know that he heareth us always; therefore we *pray* to him *without ceasing*. We pray, because we love. And “we love him because he first loved us.”

5. “*Our Father*,” — Not *mine* only who now cry unto him; but *our's*, in the most extensive sense. The God and *Father of the spirits of all flesh*; the Father of angels and men: (so the very Heathens acknowledged him to be, *Πατήρ ἀνθρώπων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*.) The Father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth. Therefore with him there is no respect of persons. He loveth all that he hath made. “He is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works. And the Lord’s delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; in them that trust in him through the Son of his Love, knowing they are *accepted thro’ the beloved*. But “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Yea, and all mankind, seeing “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” even to die the death, that they “might not perish but have everlasting life.”

6. *Which art in heaven*: high and lifted up; God over all, blessed for ever. Who sitting on the circle of the heavens, beholdeith all things both in heaven and earth. Whose eye pervades the whole sphere of created Being; yea and of un-
created

created night : unto whom *known are all his works*, and all the works of every creature, not only *from the beginning of the world* (a poor, low, weak translation) but ἀπ' αἰῶνος from all eternity, from everlasting to everlasting : who constrains the host of heaven, as well as the children of men, to cry out with wonder and amazement, O the depth ! “ The depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! ” *Which art in heaven*—the Lord and Ruler of all, superintending and disposing all things : who art the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the blessed and only Potentate : who art strong and girded about with power, doing whatsoever pleaseth thee ! The Almighty : for whensoever thou willest, to do is present with thee. *In heaven*,—eminently there. Heaven is thy throne, the place where thine honour particularly dwelleth. But not there alone ; for thou fillest heaven and earth, the whole expanse of space. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high !

Therefore should we “ serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence.” Therefore should we think, speak and act, as continually under the eye, in the immediate presence of the Lord, the King.

7. “ Hallowed be thy name.” This is the first of the six petitions, whereof the prayer itself is composed. The name of God is God himself ; the nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man : it means therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections—His eternity, particularly signified by his great and incommunicable name JEHOVAH, as the apostle John translates it, τὸ ἀ, καὶ τὸ ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος. ὁ ὢν, καὶ ὁ ἦν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχομενος “ The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, he which is, and which was, and which is to come : ”—his *fulness of being*, denoted by his other great name, *I am that I am*—His Omnipresence—His Omnipotence : who is indeed the only Agent

Agent in the material world : all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God : and he is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible ; which could neither act nor exist, without the continued influx and agency of his almighty power.—His Wisdom, clearly deduced from the things that are seen, from the goodly order of the universe.—His Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, discovered to us in the very first line of his written Word ברא אלהים : literally, *the Gods created*, a plural noun joined with a verb of the singular number : as well as in every part of his subsequent revelations, given by the mouth of all his holy Prophets and Apostles.—His essential Purity and Holiness.—And above all, his Love, which is the very brightness of his glory.

In praying that God, or his *name*, may be hallowed or glorified, we pray that he may be known, such as he is, by all that are capable thereof, by all intelligent beings, and with affections suitable to that knowledge : that he may be duly honoured and feared and loved by all in heaven above and in the earth beneath ; by all angels and men, whom for that end he has made capable of knowing and loving him to eternity.

8. *Thy kingdom come.* This has a close connexion with the preceding petition. In order that the name of God may be hallowed, we pray that his kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, may come. This kingdom then comes to a particular person, when he *repents and believes the gospel* : when he is taught of God, not only to know himself, but to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. As “this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” so it is the kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer’s heart : the Lord God Omnipotent then reigneth, when he is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto himself his mighty power, that he may sub-
due

due all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

When therefore God shall "give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession;" when "all kingdoms shall bow before him, and all nations shall do him service;" when "the mountain of the Lord's house," the Church of Christ "shall be established in the top of the mountains;" when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved:" then shall it be seen, that "the Lord is King and hath put on glorious apparel, appearing to every soul of man, as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. And it is meet for all those who *love his appearing*, to pray that he would hasten the time: that this his kingdom, the kingdom of grace may come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth; that all mankind receiving him for their King, truly believing in his name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him for ever and ever.

For this also we pray in those words, *Thy kingdom come*: we pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death, taking all things into his own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.

Exactly answerable to all this, are those awful words, in the prayer, at the burial of the dead, "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee of the

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gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom: that we with all those that are departed, in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy everlasting glory."

9. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is the necessary and immediate consequence, wherever the kingdom of God is come: wherever God dwells in the soul by faith, and Christ reigns in the heart by love.

It is probable, many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words, are apt to imagine, they are only an expression of, or petition for resignation; for a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is not what we pray for in this petition, at least not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passive, as for an active conformity to the will of God, in saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

How is it done by the angels of God in heaven? Those who now circle his throne rejoicing? They do it *willingly*; they love his commandments, and gladly hearken to his words. It is their meat and drink to do his will; it is their highest glory and joy. They do it *continually*; there is no interruption in their willing service. They rest not day nor night, but employ every hour (speaking after the manner of men; otherwise our measures of duration, days, and nights, and hours, have no place in eternity) in fulfilling his commands, in executing his designs, in performing the counsel of his will. And they do it *perfectly*. No sin, no defect belongs to angelic minds. It is true, *the stars are not pure in his sight*, even the morning-stars that sing together before him. *In his sight*, that is in comparison of him, the very angels are

are not pure. But this does not imply, That they are not pure *in themselves*. Doubtless they are; they are without spot and blameless. They are altogether devoted to his will, and perfectly obedient in all things.

If we view them in another light, we may observe, The angels of God in heaven, do *all* the will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is his will. Again, they do all the will of God, *as* he willeth, in the manner which pleases him, and no other. Yea, and they do this, only *because* it is his will; for this and no other reason.

10. When therefore we pray, That the "will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven," the meaning is, That all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as *willingly* as the holy angels: that these may do it *continually* even as they, without any interruption of their willing service: yea, and that they may do it *perfectly*; that "the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in them all which is well pleasing in his sight."

In other words, we pray, That we and all mankind, may do the whole will of God in all things: nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable will of God. We pray that we may do the whole will of God *as* he willeth, in the manner that pleases him: and lastly, That we may do it, *because* it is his will: that this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive of whatsoever we think, or whatsoever we speak or do.

11. "Give us this day our daily bread." In the three former petitions, we have been praying for all mankind. We come now more particularly to desire a supply for our own wants. Not that we are directed even here, to confine our prayer al-

together to ourselves: but this and each of the following petitions may be used for the whole Church of Christ upon earth.

By *bread* we may understand, all things needful whether for our souls or bodies: τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ σωτηρίαν *the things pertaining to life and godliness.* We understand not barely the outward bread, which our Lord terms *the meat which perisheth*; but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food *which endureth unto everlasting life.* It was the judgment of many of the ancient Fathers, that we are here to understand, the sacramental bread also: daily received in the beginning by the whole Church of Christ, and highly esteemed till the love of many waxed cold, as the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.

“Our daily bread.” The word we render *daily* has been differently explained by different Commentators. But the most plain and natural sense of it seems to be this, which is retained in almost all translations, as well ancient as modern: what is sufficient for this day; and so for each day, as it succeeds.

12. *Give us.* For we claim nothing of right, but only of free mercy. We deserve not the air we breathe, the earth that bears, or the sun that shines upon us. All our desert, we own, is hell. But God loves us freely. Therefore we ask him to *give*, what we can no more *procure* for ourselves, than we can *merit* it at his hands.

Not that either the goodness or the power of God is a reason for us to stand idle. It is his will, that we should use all diligence in all things, that we should employ our utmost endeavours, as much as if our success were the natural effect of our own wisdom and strength. And then, as though we had done nothing, we are to depend on him, the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

This

This day. For we are to take no thought for the morrow. For this very end has our wise Creator divided life into these little portions of time, so clearly separated from each other: that we might look on every day, as a fresh gift of God, another life, which we may devote to his glory; and that every evening may be the close of life, beyond which we are to see nothing but eternity.

13. "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." As nothing but sin can hinder the bounty of God from flowing forth upon every creature, so this petition naturally follows the former; that all hinderances being removed, we may the more clearly trust in the God of love, for every manner of thing which is good.

Our trespasses. The word properly signifies *our debts*. Thus our sins are frequently represented in Scripture: every sin laying us under a fresh debt to God; to whom we already owe, as it were, ten thousand talents. What then can we answer when he shall say, *Pay me that thou owest*? We are utterly insolvent: we have nothing to pay: we have wasted all our substance. Therefore if he deal with us according to the rigour of his law, if he exact what he justly may, he must command us to be "bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentors."

Indeed we are already bound hand and foot, by the chains of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds, wherewith the world, the flesh and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But considered, as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts immense and numberless. Well therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, may we cry unto him, that he would *frankly forgive* us all.

The word translated *forgive*, implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And if we attain the former, the latter follows of course; if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever, through the free grace of God in Christ, we *receive forgiveness of sins*, we receive likewise "a lot among those which are sanctified, by faith which is in him." Sin has lost its power; it has no dominion over those, who *are under grace*, that is, in favour with God. As "there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus," so they are freed from sin as well as from guilt. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, and they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

14. "As we forgive them that trespass against us." In these words our Lord clearly declares, both on what condition, and in what degree or manner we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us, *if we forgive*, and *as we forgive others*. This is a point of the utmost importance. And our blessed Lord is so jealous, lest at any time we should let it slip out of our thoughts, that he not only inserts it in the body of his prayer, but presently after repeats it twice over. * "If, saith he, ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Secondly, God forgives us, *as we forgive others*. So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we so far cut short the forgiveness of our own. God cannot clearly and fully forgive us. He may shew us some degree of mercy. But we will not suffer him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities.

* Ver. 14, 15.

In

In the mean time, while we do not from our hearts, forgive our neighbour his trespasses, what manner of prayer are we offering to God, whenever we utter these words? We are indeed setting God at open defiance: we are daring him to do his worst. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us! That is in plain terms, "Do not forgive us at all: we desire no favour at thy hands. We pray, that thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that thy wrath may abide upon us." But can you seriously offer such a prayer to God? And hath he not yet cast you quick into hell? O tempt him no longer! Now, even now, by his grace, forgive as you would be forgiven! Now have compassion on thy fellow-servant, as God hath had and will have pity on thee.

15. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "And lead us not into temptation." The word translated *temptation*, means trial of any kind. And so the English word *temptation* was formerly taken in an indifferent sense: although now it is usually understood, of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses; first, in its general, then in its restrained acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he saith, * "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, [or approved of God,] he shall receive the crown of life." He immediately adds, taking the word in the latter sense, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust," or *desire*, ἐξελκόμενος, drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe, and enticed, caught as a fish with a bait. Then it is, when he is thus drawn away or enticed, then he properly enters into temptation. The temptation covers him

* Chap. i. ver. 12, 13.

as a cloud : it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of the snare ? Therefore we beseech God, “ not to lead us into temptation,” that is (seeing God *tempteth no man*) not to suffer us to be led into it. *But deliver us from evil* : rather, *from the evil one*, ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Ὁ Πονηρὸς is unquestionably *the wicked One*, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God by faith, are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them : and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time ; but he cannot destroy ; for God is on their side, who will not fail in the end, to *avenge his own elect, that cry unto him, day and night*, “ Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into temptation. Do thou make a way for us to escape, that the wicked One touch us not.”

16. The conclusion of this divine Prayer, commonly called The Doxology, is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgment of the attributes and works of God. “ For thine is the kingdom ;” the sovereign right of all things that are, or ever were created : yea, thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. “ The power :” the executive power, whereby thou governest all things in thy everlasting kingdom, whereby thou dost whatsoever pleaseth thee, in all places of thy dominion.— “ And the glory ;” the praise due from every creature, for thy power and the mightiness of thy kingdom, and for all thy wondrous works, which thou workest from everlasting, and shalt do, world without end, *for ever and ever ! Amen !* So be it !

I believe it will not be unacceptable to the serious Reader to subjoin

A Paraphrase

1 **F**ATHER of all, whose powerful voice,
 Call'd forth this universal frame,
 Whose mercies over all rejoice,
 Through endless ages still the same:
 Thou by thy word upholdest all;
 Thy bounteous Love to all is shew'd,
 Thou hear'st thy every creature call,
 And fillest every mouth with good.

2 In heaven thou reign'st, enthron'd in light,
 Nature's expanse beneath thee spread;
 Earth, air, and sea, before thy sight,
 And hell's deep gloom are open laid;
 Wisdom, and might, and love are thine:
 Prostrate before thy face we fall,
 Confess thine attributes divine,
 And hail thee sovereign Lord of all.

3 Thee, sovereign Lord, let all confess,
 That moves in earth, or air, or sky,
 Revere thy power, thy goodness bless,
 Tremble before thy piercing eye.
 All ye who owe to Him your birth,
 In praise your every hour employ:
 Jehovah reigns! Be glad, O earth,
 And shout, ye morning-stars, for joy.

4 Son of thy Sire's eternal love,
 Take to thyself thy mighty power;
 Let all earth's sons thy mercy prove,
 Let all thy bleeding grace adore.
 The triumphs of thy love display,
 In every heart reign thou alone;
 Till all thy foes confess thy sway,
 And glory ends what grace begun.

5 Spirit of grace, and health, and power,
 Fountain of light and love below,
 Abroad thine healing influence shower,
 O'er all the nations let it flow.

Inflame

Inflame our hearts with perfect love,
 In us the work of faith fulfil;
 So not heaven's host shall swifter move
 Than we on earth to do thy will.

6 Father, 'tis thine each day to yield
 Thy children's wants a fresh supply;
 Thou cloth'st the lilies of the field,
 And hearest the young ravens cry.
 On thee we cast our care; we live
 Through thee, who know'st our every need;
 O feed us with thy grace, and give
 Our souls this day the living bread.

7 Eternal, spotless Lamb of God,
 Before the world's foundation slain,
 Sprinkle us ever with thy blood,
 O cleanse and keep us ever clean.
 To every soul (all praise to thee)
 Our bowels of compassion move;
 And all mankind by this may see
 God is in us; for God is love.

8 Giver and Lord of life, whose power
 And guardian care for all are free;
 To thee in fierce temptation's hour,
 From sin and Satan let us flee.
 Thine, Lord, we are, and ours thou art,
 In us be all thy goodness shew'd;
 Renew, enlarge, and fill our heart
 With peace and joy, and heaven and God.

9 Blessing and honour, praise and love,
 Co-equal, co-eternal, Three,
 In earth below, in heaven above,
 By all thy works be paid to thee.
 Thrice holy, thine the kingdom is,
 The power omnipotent is Thine;
 And when created nature dies,
 Thy never-ceasing glories shine.

S E R M O N XXVI.

DISCOURSE the Seventh upon our LORD'S
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. VI. 16, 17, 18.

- " Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance ; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.
- " But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ;
- " That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

1. **I**T has been the endeavour of Satan from the beginning of the world, to put asunder what God hath joined together ; to separate inward from outward Religion, to set one of these at variance with the other. And herein he has met with no small success, among those who were ignorant of his devices.

Many in all ages, having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, have been strictly attached to the *righteousness of the law*, the performance of outward duties, but in the mean time wholly regardless of inward righteousness, *the righteousness which is of God by faith*. And many have run into the opposite extreme, disregarding all outward duties,* perhaps even " speaking evil of the law and judging the law," so far as it enjoins the performance of them.

2. It

2. It is by this very device of Satan, that faith and works have been so often set at variance with each other. And many who had a real zeal for God, have for a time fallen into the snare on either hand. Some have magnified faith to the utter exclusion of good works, not only from being the cause of our justification (for we know that man is "justified freely by the redemption which is in Jesus)" but from being the necessary fruit of it, yea, from the having any place in the Religion of Jesus Christ. Others, eager to avoid that dangerous mistake, have run as much too far the contrary way; and either maintained, That good works were the cause, at least the previous condition of justification; or spoken of them as if they were all in all, the whole Religion of Jesus Christ.

3. In the same manner have the end and the means of Religion, been set at variance with each other. Some well-meaning men, have seemed to place all Religion, in attending the prayers of the Church, in receiving the Lord's-supper, in hearing sermons, and reading books of piety: neglecting mean time the end of all these, The love of God and their neighbour. And this very thing has confirmed others in the neglect, if not contempt of the ordinances of God; so wretchedly abused to undermine and overthrow the very end they were designed to establish.

4. But of all the means of grace there is scarce any, concerning which men have run into greater extremes, than that of which our Lord speaks in the above-mentioned words, I mean, religious fasting. How have some exalted this beyond all Scripture and Reason? And others utterly disregarded it? As it were, revenging themselves, by undervaluing, as much as the former had overvalued it. Those have spoken of it, as if it were all in all; if not the end itself, yet infallibly connected with it: these, as if it were just nothing, as if it were a fruitless labour, which had no relation at all thereto.

Whereas

Whereas it is certain the truth lies between them both. It is not all; nor yet is it nothing. It is not the end, but it is a precious means thereto; a means which God himself has ordained; and in which therefore, when it is duly used, he will surely give us his blessing.

In order to set this in the clearest light, I shall endeavour to shew, first, What is the nature of Fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof: secondly, What are the reasons, grounds and ends of it: thirdly, How we may answer the most plausible objections against it: and fourthly, In what manner it should be performed.

I. 1. I shall endeavour to shew, first, What is the nature of Fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof. As to the nature of it, all the inspired Writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word, to fast, in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food. This is so clear, that it would be labour lost to quote the words of David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and the Prophets which followed, or of our Lord and his Apostles; all agreeing in this, that, to fast, is not to eat for a time prescribed.

2. To this other circumstances were usually joined by them of old, which had no necessary connexion with it. Such were the neglect of their apparel, the laying aside those ornaments which they were accustomed to wear: the putting on mourning, the strewing ashes upon their head, or wearing sackcloth next their skin. But we find little mention made in the New Testament, of any of these indifferent circumstances. Nor does it appear that any stress was laid upon them, by the Christians of the purer ages; however some penitents might voluntarily use them, as outward signs of inward humiliation. Much less did the Apostles or the Christians cotemporary with them, beat or tear their own flesh. Such discipline as this was

not unbecoming the Priests or worshippers of Baal. The gods of the Heathens were but devils; and it was doubtless acceptable to their devil-god, when his Priests, “* cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, till the blood gushed out upon them:” but it cannot be pleasing to Him, nor become his followers, who *came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*

3. As to the degrees or measures of fasting, we have instances of some who have fasted several days together. So Moses, Elijah, and our blessed Lord, being endued with supernatural strength for that purpose, are recorded to have fasted without intermission, *forty days and forty nights.* But the time of fasting more frequently mentioned in Scripture, is, one day, from morning till evening. And this was the fast commonly observed among the ancient Christians. But beside these they had also their half fasts (*Semijejuna*, as *Tertullian* styles them) on the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) throughout the year; on which they took no sustenance till three in the afternoon, the time when they returned from the public service.

4. Nearly related to this, is what our Church seems peculiarly to mean by the term *Abstinence*: which may be used when we cannot fast entirely by reason of sickness or bodily weakness. This is, the eating little; the abstaining in part; the tasting a smaller quantity of food than usual. I do not remember any scriptural instance of this. But neither can I condemn it. For the Scripture does not: it may have its use, and receive a blessing from God.

5. The lowest kind of fasting, if it can be called by that name, is the abstaining from pleasant food. Of this we have several instances in Scripture, besides that of Daniel and his brethren, who from a peculiar consideration, namely, that they might

* 1 Kings xviii. 28.

* “not defile themselves with the portions of the King’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank,” (a daily provision of which the King had appointed for them) *requested* and obtained of *the Prince of the Eunuchs, pulse to eat and water to drink.* Perhaps from a mistaken imitation of this, might spring the very ancient custom, of abstaining from flesh and wine, during such times as were set apart for fasting and abstinence. If it did not rather arise from a supposition that these were the most pleasant food, and a belief, That it was proper to use what was least pleasing, at those times of solemn approach to God.

6. In the Jewish Church, there were some stated fasts. Such was the fast of the seventh month, appointed by God himself to be observed by all Israel, under the severest penalty. † “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, On the tenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement; and ye shall afflict your souls—to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.” In after ages several other stated fasts were added to these. So mention is made by the Prophet Zechariah, of the Fast, not only “of the seventh, but also of || the fourth, of the fifth, and of the tenth month.”

In the ancient Christian Church there were likewise stated fasts, and those both annual and weekly. Of the former sort was that before Easter; observed by some for eight and forty hours: by others, for an entire week; by many for two weeks, taking no sustenance till the evening of each day. Of the latter, those of the fourth and sixth days of the week observed (as Epiphanius writes, remarking it as an undeniable fact) *ἐν ὅλη τῇ διακρίνῃ in the whole habitable earth*, at least, in every place where any Christians made their abode. The annual fasts in our Church are, “The forty days of

* Daniel iv. 5, &c. † Lev. xxiii. 26, &c. || Zech. viii. 19.

Lent, the Ember days at the four seasons, the Rogation days, and the Vigils or Eves of several solemn festivals: the weekly, all Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day.

But beside those which were fixed, in every nation fearing God, there have always been occasional fasts, appointed from time to time, as the particular circumstances and occasions of each required. So * when “the children of Moab and the children of Ammon, came against Jehoshaphat to battle; Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” And so † “in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, in the ninth month,” when they were afraid of the King of Babylon, the Princes of “Judah proclaimed a fast before the Lord, to all the people of Jerusalem.”

And in like manner, particular persons, who take heed unto their ways, and desire to walk humbly and closely with God, will find frequent occasion for private seasons of thus afflicting their souls, before their Father which is in secret. And it is to this kind of fasting, that the directions here given, do chiefly and primarily refer.

II. 1. I proceed, to shew, in the second place, What are the grounds, the reasons and ends of Fasting.

And, first, men who are under strong emotions of mind, who are affected with any vehement passion, such as sorrow or fear, are often swallowed up therein, and even *forget to eat their bread*. At such seasons they have little regard for food, not even what is needful to sustain nature; much less for any delicacy or variety, being taken up with quite different thoughts. Thus when Saul said, || “I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me;” it is recorded, “He had eaten no bread, all the

* 2 Chron. xx. 1. 3. † Jer. xxxvi. 9. || 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. 10.

day nor all the night." Thus those who were in the ship with St. Paul, "when no small tempest lay upon them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, * continued fasting, having taken nothing;" no regular meal, for fourteen days together. And thus "David and all the men that were with him, [when they heard that] the people were fled from the battle, and that many of the people were fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son were dead also; † mourned and wept and fasted until even, for Saul and Jonathan and for the house of Israel."

Nay, many times they whose minds are deeply engaged, are impatient of any interruption, and even loath their needful food, as diverting their thoughts, from what they desire should engross their whole attention. Even as Saul, when on the occasion mentioned before, he had "fallen all along upon the earth and there was no strength in him; yet, said; I will not eat; till his servants, together with the woman compelled him."

2. Here then is the natural ground of Fasting. One who is under deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, would without any rule, without knowing or considering, whether it were a command of God or not, *forget to eat his bread*, abstain not only from pleasant, but even from needful food. Like St. Paul, who after he was "led into Damascus, was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink," Acts ix. 9.

Yea, when the storm rose high, when *an horrible dread overwhelmed* one who had long been without God in the world; his soul would *loath all manner of meat*; it would be unpleasing and irksome to him. He would be impatient of any thing that should interrupt his ceaseless cry, *Lord, save! or I perish.*

* Acts xxvii. 23. † 2 Sam. i. 12.

P 3 How

How strongly is this impressed by our Church, in the first part of the Homily on Fasting?

“When men feel in themselves the heavy burthen of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eye of their mind the horror of hell; they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart, and cannot but accuse themselves and open their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied (taken up) partly with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid apart, and loathsomeness (or loathing) of all worldly things and pleasure cometh in place. So that nothing then liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and behaviour of body to shew themselves weary of life.”

3. Another reason or ground of Fasting is this. Many of those who now fear God, are deeply sensible how often they have sinned against him, by the abuse of these lawful things. They know, how much they have sinned by excess of food; how long they have transgressed the holy law of God, with regard to temperance, if not sobriety too: how they have indulged their sensual appetites, perhaps to the impairing even their bodily health; certainly to the no small hurt of their soul. For hereby they continually fed and increased that sprightly folly, that airiness of mind, that levity of temper, that gay inattention to things of the deepest concern, that giddiness and carelessness of spirit, which were no other than drunkenness of soul, which stupified all their noblest faculties no less than excess of wine or strong drink. To remove therefore the effect, they remove the cause: they keep at a distance from all excess. They abstain, as far as is possible, from what had well nigh plunged them into everlasting perdition. They often wholly refrain;

frain; always take care to be sparing and temperate in all things.

4. They likewise well remember, how fulness of bread, increased not only carelessness and levity of spirit, but also foolish and unholy desires, yea, unclean and vile affections. And this experience puts beyond all doubt. Even a genteel, regular sensuality, is continually sensualizing the soul, and sinking it into a level with the beasts that perish. It cannot be expressed what an effect variety and delicacy of food have on the mind as well as the body; making it just ripe for every pleasure of sense, as soon as opportunity shall invite. Therefore on this ground also every wise man will refrain his soul, and keep it low; will wean it more and more from all those indulgences of the inferior appetites, which naturally tend to chain it down to the earth, and to pollute as well as debase it. Here is another perpetual reason for fasting: to remove the food of lust and sensuality, to withdraw the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, of vile and vain affections.

5. Perhaps we need not altogether omit, (although I know not if we should do well, to lay any great stress upon it) another reason for fasting, which some good men have largely insisted on: namely, the punishing themselves for having abused the good gifts of God, by sometimes wholly refraining from them: thus exercising a kind of holy revenge upon themselves, for their past folly and ingratitude, in turning the things which should have been for their health, into an occasion of falling. They suppose David to have had an eye to this when he said, *I wept and chastened, or punished, my soul with fasting*: and St. Paul, when he mentions *what revenge* godly sorrow occasioned in the Corinthians.

6. A fifth, and more weighty reason for fasting, is, That it is an help to prayer: particularly, when we set apart larger portions of time for private prayer.

prayer. Then especially it is, that God is often pleased to lift up the souls of his servants, above all the things of earth, and some times to wrap them up, as it were, into the third heavens. And it is chiefly, as it is an help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found a means in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing not one virtue, not chastity only, (as some have idly imagined, without any ground, either from Scripture, Reason or Experience) but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience; deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God and every holy and heavenly affection.

7. Not that there is any natural or necessary connexion, between fasting, and the blessings God conveys thereby. But he will have mercy as he will have mercy: he will convey whatsoever seemeth him good, by whatsoever means he is pleased to appoint. And he hath in all ages appointed this, to be a means of averting his wrath, and obtaining whatever blessings we from time to time stand in need of.

How powerful a means this is, to avert the wrath of God, we may learn from the remarkable instance of Ahab. *There was none like him, who did not sell himself; wholly give himself up, like a slave bought with money, to work wickedness.* Yet whenever he “rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and went softly: the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.”

It was for this end, to avert the wrath of God, that Daniel fought God, *with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* This appears from the whole tenor of his prayer, particularly from the solemn conclusion of it. “O Lord, according to all thy righteousnesses [or mercies] let thy anger be turned away from thy holy mountain—Hear the prayer of thy servant,

servant, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate.—O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do, for thine own sake,” Dan. ix. 3, 16, &c.

8. But it is not only from the people of God that we learn, when his anger is moved, to seek him by fasting and prayer; but even from the Heathens. When Jonah had declared, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them unto the least. For the King of Nineveh arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing. Let them not feed, nor drink water.” (Not that the beast had sinned, or could repent; but that by their example man might be admonished, considering that for his sin, the anger of God was hanging over all creatures.) “Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” — And their labour was not in vain. The fierce anger of God was turned away from them. “God saw their works;” (the fruits of that repentance and faith, which he had wrought in them by his Prophet;) and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Jonah iii. 4, &c.

9. And it is a means not only of turning away the wrath of God, but also of obtaining whatever blessings we stand in need of. So when the other tribes were smitten before the Benjamites, * “all the children of Israel went up unto the house of the Lord, and wept and fasted that day until even;” and then the Lord said, “Go up again; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand.” So Samuel * gathered all Israel together, when they were in bondage to the Philistines, “and they fasted

* Judg. xx. 26, &c. † 1 Sam. vii. 6, &c.

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on that day before the Lord : and when the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, the Lord thundered upon them with a great thunder, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." So Ezra : " I * proclaimed a fast at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones—and he was entreated of us." So Nehemiah; " I † fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." And God granted him mercy in the sight of the King.

10. In like manner, the Apostles always joined fasting with prayer, when they desired the blessing of God on any important undertaking. Thus we read, Acts. xiii. " There were in the Church that was at Antioch certain Prophets and Teachers—As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, [doubtless for direction in this very affair] the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had (a second time) fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away," ver. 1, 2, 3.

Thus also Paul and Barnabas themselves, as we read in the following chapter, when they " returned again to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples; and when they had ordained them Elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, commended them to the Lord, ver. 23.

Yea, that blessings, are to be obtained in the use of this means, which are not otherwise attainable, our Lord expressly declares in his answer to his disciples asking, " § Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this moun-

* Ezra viii. 21. † Nehem. i. 4. 11. § Matt. xvii. 19, &c.

tain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit, this kind (of devils) goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting:" these being the appointed means of attaining that faith, whereby the very devils are subject unto you.

11. These were the *appointed* means. For it was not merely by the light of reason, or of natural conscience, (as it is called) that the people of God have been in all ages directed, to use fasting as a means to these ends. But they have been from time to time taught it of God himself, by clear and open revelations of his will. Such is that remarkable one by the Prophet Joel, * "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Turn you unto me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.—Who knoweth if the Lord will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly—Then will the Lord be jealous over his land, and will spare his people. Yea, I will send you corn and wine and oil—I will no more make you a reproach among the Heathen."

Nor are they only temporal blessings which God directs his people to expect in the use of these means. For at the same time that he promised to those who should seek him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, "I will render you the ears which the grasshopper hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar and the palmer-worm, my great army," he subjoins, "So shall ye eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God—Ye shall also know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God." And then immediately follows the great gospel-promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall

* Joel. ii. 12, &c.

see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

12. Now whatsoever reasons there were to quicken those of old in the zealous and constant discharge of this duty, they are of equal force still to quicken us. But about all these we have a peculiar reason for being in *fastings often*, namely, the command of Him by whose name we are called. He does not indeed in this place *expressly* enjoin, either fasting, giving of alms, or prayer. But his directions how to fast, to give alms, and pray, are of the same force with such injunctions. For the commanding us, to do any thing *thus*, is an unquestionable command, to do that thing; seeing it is impossible to perform it *thus*, if it be not performed *at all*. Consequently, the saying, Give alms, pray, fast, in *such a manner*, is a clear command to perform all those duties: as well as to perform them in that *manner*, which shall in no wise lose its reward.

And this is a still farther motive and encouragement, to the performance of this duty; even the promise which our Lord has graciously annexed to the due discharge of it: "thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Such are the plain grounds, reasons and ends of Fasting; such our encouragement to persevere therein, notwithstanding abundance of objections which men, wiser than their Lord, have been continually raising against it.

III. 1. The most plausible of these I come now to consider. And, I first, It has been frequently said, "Let a Christian fast from sin, and not from food: this is what God requires at his hands." So he does: but he requires the other also. Therefore this ought to be done, and that not left undone.

View your argument in its full dimensions; and you will easily judge of the strength of it.

"If a Christian ought to abstain from sin, then he ought not to abstain from food :

But a Christian ought to abstain from sin :

Therefore he ought not to abstain from food."

That a Christian ought to abstain from sin, is most true. But how does it follow from hence, that he ought not to abstain from food ? Yea, let him do both the one and the other. Let him, by the grace of God, always abstain from sin ; and let him often abstain from food ; for such reasons and ends as Experience and Scripture plainly shews to be answered thereby.

2. "But is it not better (as it has, secondly, been objected) to abstain from pride and vanity, from foolish and hurtful desires, from peevishness, and anger, and discontent, than from food ?" Without question it is. But here again we have need to remind you of our Lord's words, "These things ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone." And indeed the latter is only in order to the former ; it is a means to that great end. We abstain from food with this view, that by the grace of God, conveyed into our souls, through this outward means, in conjunction with all the other channels of his grace which he hath appointed, we may be enabled to abstain from every passion and temper, which is not pleasing in his sight. We refrain from the one, that being endued with power from on high, we may be able to refrain from the other. So that your argument proves just the contrary to what you designed. It proves, that we ought to fast. For if we ought to abstain from evil tempers and desires, then we ought thus to abstain from food : since these little instances of self denial are the ways God hath chose, wherein to bestow that great salvation.

3. "But we do not find it so in fact : (this is a third objection.) We have fasted much and often. But what did it avail ? We were not a whit better : we found no blessing therein. Nay, we have found

it an hinderance rather than an help. Instead of preventing anger, for instance, or fretfulness, it has been a means of increasing them to such a height, that we could neither bear others nor ourselves." This may very possibly be the case. It is possible, either to fast or pray, in such a manner, as to make you much worse than before; more unhappy, and more unholy. Yet the fault does not lie in the means itself; but in the *manner* of using it. Use it still, but use it in a different manner. Do what God commands *as* he commands it, and then doubtless his promise shall not fail; his blessing shall be withheld no longer: but "when thou fastest in secret, he that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

4. "But is it not mere superstition, (so it has been, fourthly, objected,) to imagine that God regards such little things as these?" If you say it is, you condemn all the generations of God's children. But will you say, These were all weak, superstitious men? Can you be so hardy as to affirm this, both of Moses and Joshua, of Samuel and David, of Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the Prophets? Yea, of a greater than all, the Son of God himself? It is certain, both our Master, and all these his servants, did imagine, That fasting is not a little thing, and that he who is higher than the highest doth regard it. Of the same judgment, it is plain, were all his Apostles, after they were "filled with the Holy Ghost and with wisdom." When they had *the unction of the Holy One, teaching them all things*, they still *approved themselves the Ministers of God, by fasting*, as well as *by the armour of righteousness on the right-hand and on the left*. After "the bridegroom was taken from them, then did they fast in those days." Nor would they attempt any thing, (as we have seen above) wherein the glory of God was nearly concerned, such as the sending forth labourers
into

into the harvest, without solemn fasting as well as prayer.

5. "But if fasting be indeed of so great importance, and attended with such a blessing, is it not best, say some, fifthly, to fast always? Not to do it now and then, but to keep a continual fast? To use as much abstinence at all times, as our bodily strength will bear?" Let none be discouraged from doing this. By all means use as little and plain food, exercise as much self-denial herein at all times, as your bodily strength will bear. And this may conduce, by the blessing of God, to several of the great ends above-mentioned. It may be a considerable help not only to chastity, but also to heavenly-mindedness; to the weaning your affections from things below, and setting them on things above. But this is not fasting, scriptural fasting: it is never termed so in all the Bible. It in some measure answers some of the ends thereof; but still it is another thing. Practise it by all means; but not so as thereby to set aside a command of God, and an instituted means of averting his judgments, and obtaining the blessings of his children.

6. Use continually then as much abstinence as you please; which taken thus, is no other than Christian temperance. But this need not at all interfere with your observing solemn times of fasting and prayer. For instance; your habitual abstinence or temperance, would not prevent your fasting in secret, if you was suddenly overwhelmed with huge sorrow and remorse, and with horrible fear and dismay. Such a situation of mind would almost constrain you to fast: you would loath your dainty food: you would scarce endure even to take such supplies, as were needful for the body, till God "lifted you up out of the horrible pit, and set your feet upon a rock, and ordered your goings." The same would be the case if you was in agony of desire, vehemently wrestling with God for his blessing. You would need none to instruct you,

not to eat bread, till you had obtained the request of your lips.

7. Again, had you been at Nineveh, when it was proclaimed throughout the city, "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste any thing: let them not feed or drink water, but let them cry mightily unto God:" would your continual fast have been any reason for not bearing part in that general humiliation? Doubtless it would not. You would have been as much concerned as any other not to taste food on that day.

No more would abstinence, or the observing a continual fast, have excused any of the children of Israel, from fasting on the tenth day of the seventh month, the great annual day of atonement. There was no exception for these in that solemn decree, "Whatsoever soul it shall be, that shall not be afflicted (shall not fast) in that day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

Lastly, Had you been with the brethren in Antioch at the time when they fasted and prayed, before the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul, can you possibly imagine that your temperance or abstinence would have been a sufficient cause for not joining therein? Without doubt, if you had not, you would soon have been cut off from the Christian community. You would have deservedly been cast out from among them, "as bringing confusion into the Church of God."

IV. 1. I am in the last place, to shew, In what manner we are to fast that it may be an acceptable service unto the Lord. And, first, Let it be done *unto the Lord*, with our eye singly fixed on him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, To glorify our Father which is in heaven: to express our sorrow and shame, for our manifold transgressions of his holy law: to wait for an increase of purifying grace, drawing our affections to things above: to add seriousness and earnestness to

to our prayers: to avert the wrath of God, and to obtain all the great and precious promises, which he hath made to us in Christ Jesus.

Let us beware of mocking God, of turning our fast as well as our prayers into an abomination unto the Lord, by the mixture of any temporal view, particularly by seeking the praise of men. Against this our blessed Lord more peculiarly guards us, in the words of the text. "Moreover, when ye fast, be ye not as the hypocrites, [such were too many who were called the people of God,] of a sad countenance;" sour, affectedly sad, putting their looks into a peculiar form. "For they disfigure their faces," not only by unnatural distortions, but also by covering them with dust and ashes.—"That they may appear unto men to fast:" This is their chief, if not only design. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;" even the admiration and praise of men. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face." Do as thou art accustomed to do at other times—"That thou appear not unto men to fast," (let this be no part of thy intention: if they know it without any desire of thine, it matters not, thou art neither the better nor the worse) "but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

2. But if we desire this reward, let us beware, secondly, of fancying we *merit* any thing of God by our fasting. We cannot be too often warned of this; inasmuch as a desire to *establish our own righteousness*, to procure salvation of *debt* and not of *grace*, is so deeply rooted in all our hearts:—fasting is only a way which God hath ordained, wherein we wait for his *unmerited* mercy; and wherein, without any desert of ours, he hath promised, *freely* to give us his blessing.

3. Not that we are to imagine the performing the bare outward act, will receive any blessing from God. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen, saith

the Lord : a day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ?" Are these outward acts, however strictly performed, all that is meant by a man's "afflicting his soul ? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ?" No surely. If it be a mere external service, it is all but lost labour. Such a performance may possibly afflict the body. But as to the soul, it profiteth nothing.

4. Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against : for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength. For we may not offer God murder for sacrifice, or destroy our bodies to help our souls.

But at these solemn seasons, we may even in great weakness of body, avoid that other extreme, for which God condemns those who of old expostulated with him for not accepting their fasts. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not ?—Behold in the day of your fast you had pleasure, saith the Lord.*—If we cannot wholly abstain, we may at least abstain from pleasant food ; and then we shall not seek his face in vain.

5. But let us take care to afflict our souls as well as our bodies. Let every season either of public or private fasting, be a season of exercising all those holy affections, which are implied in a broken and contrite heart. Let it be a season of devout mourning, of godly sorrow for sin : such a sorrow as that of the Corinthians, concerning which the Apostle saith, " I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. For ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing." *For godly sorrow* (*ἡ κατὰ Θεοῦ λύπη*) the sorrow which is according to God, which is a precious gift of his Spirit,

Spirit, lifting the soul to God from whom it flows) *worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.* Yea, and let our sorrowing after a godly sort, work in us the same inward and outward repentance; the same entire change of heart, renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; and the same change of life, till we are holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation. Let it work in us the same *carefulness*, to be found in him, without spot and blameless; the same *clearing of ourselves*, by our lives rather than words, by our abstaining from all appearance of evil; the same *indignation*, vehement abhorrence of every sin; the same *fear* of our own deceitful hearts: the same *desire* to be in all things conformed to the holy and acceptable will of God; the same *zeal* for whatever may be a means of his glory, and of our growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: and the same *revenge* against Satan and all his works, against all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 9, &c.

6. And with fasting let us always join fervent prayer, pouring out our whole souls before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, laying open before him all our wants, all our guiltiness and helplessness. This is a season for enlarging our prayers, both in behalf of ourselves and of our brethren. Let us now bewail the sins of our people, and cry aloud for the city of our God: that the Lord may build up Zion, and cause his face to shine on her desolations. Thus we may observe the men of God in ancient times always joined prayer and fasting together. Thus the Apostles in all the instances cited above: and thus our Lord joins them in the discourse before us.

7. It remains only, in order to our observing such a fast as is acceptable to the Lord, that we add alms thereto; works of mercy, after our power, both to the bodies and souls of men. "With
such

such sacrifices also God is well-pleased." Thus the angel declares to Cornelius, fasting and * praying in his house, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." And this God himself expressly and largely declares, † "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.—If [when thou fastest] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make thy bones fat: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.

* Acts x. 4, &c. † Isaiah lviii. 6, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXVII.

DISCOURSE the Eighth upon our LORD's
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. VI. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

- " Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :
- " But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :
- " For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- " The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.
- " But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! "

1. **F**ROM those which are commonly termed Religious Actions, and which are real Branches of true Religion, where they spring from a pure and holy intention, and are performed in a manner suitable thereto, our Lord proceeds to the actions of *common life*, and shews that the same purity of intention, is as indispensably required in our ordinary business, as in giving alms, or fasting, or prayer.

And without question the same purity of intention, " which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labour or employment, a proper offering to God. If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer
serving

erving God in his employment, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be *seen*, or prays that he may be *heard* of men. For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. They are not only evil when they mix with our good works," with our religious actions, "but they have the same evil nature when they enter into the common business of our employments. If it were allowable to pursue them in our worldly employments, it would be allowable to pursue them in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not acceptable service, but when they proceed from a pure intention, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him, but when it is performed with the same piety of heart."

2. This our blessed Lord declares in the liveliest manner, in those strong and comprehensive words which he explains, enforces and enlarges upon, throughout this whole chapter. "The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The eye is the intention: what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be *single*, when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design, but to *know God*, and *Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*: to know him with suitable affections, loving him as he hath loved us: to please God in all things: to serve God (as we love him) with all our heart and mind and soul and strength: and to enjoy God in all and above all things, in time and in eternity

3. *If thine eye be thus single, thus fixed on God, thy whole body shall be full of light. Thy whole body,—All that is guided by the intention, as the*
body

body is by the eye. All thou art: all thou dost: thy desires, tempers, affections; thy thoughts, and words, and actions. The whole of these *shall be full of light*: full of true divine knowledge. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. *In his light thou shalt see light. He who of old commanded light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart.* He shall enlighten the eyes of thy understanding, with the knowledge of the glory of God. His Spirit shall reveal unto thee the deep things of God. The inspiration of the Holy One shall give thee understanding, and cause thee to know wisdom secretly. Yea, *the anointing* which thou receivest of him, *shall abide in thee and teach thee of all things.*

How does experience confirm this? Even after God hath opened the eyes of our understanding, if we seek or desire any thing else than God, how soon is our foolish heart darkened? Then clouds again rest upon our souls. Doubts and fears again overwhelm us. We are tossed to and fro, and know not what to do, or which is the path wherein we should go. But when we desire and seek nothing but God, clouds and doubts vanish away. We "who were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord." The night now shineth as the day; and we find, *the path of the upright is light.* God sheweth us the path wherein we should go, and *maketh plain the way before our face.*

4. The second thing which we may here understand by *light*, is holiness. While thou seekest God in all things, thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy and truth. While thou lookest unto Jesus and him alone, thou shalt be filled with the mind that was in him. Thy soul shall be renewed day by day, after the image of him that created it. If the eye of thy mind be not removed from him, if thou endurest *seeing him that is invisible*, and seeking nothing else in heaven or earth, then as thou beholdest the
glory

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glory of the Lord, "thou shalt be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

And it is also matter of daily experience, that *by grace we are thus saved through faith*. It is by faith that the eye of the mind is opened, to see the light of the glorious love of God. And as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, we are more and more filled with the love of God and man, with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering; with all the fruits of holiness which are through Christ Jesus to the glory of God the Father.

5. This light which fills him who has a single eye, implies, thirdly, Happiness as well as holiness. Surely "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to see the sun." But how much more to see the Sun of righteousness, continually shining upon the soul? And if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any peace that passeth all understanding, if any rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, they all belong to him whose eye is single. Thus is his *whole body full of light*. He walketh in the light as God is in the light, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks, *enjoying* whatever is the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus.

6. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." *If thine eye be evil*: we see there is no medium between a single and an evil eye. If the eye be not single, then it is evil. If the intention, in whatever we do, be not singly to God, if we seek any thing else, then our *mind and conscience are defiled*.

Our eye therefore is evil, if in any thing we do, we aim at any other end than God; if we have any view, but to know and to love God, please and serve him in all things: if we have any other design than to enjoy God, to be happy in him both now and for ever.

7. If thine eye be not singly fixt on God, *thy whole body shall be full of darkness.* The veil shall still remain on thy heart. Thy mind shall be more and more blinded, by *the god of this world,* lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon thee. Thou wilt be full of ignorance and error touching the things of God, not being able to receive or discern them. And even when thou hast some desire to serve God, thou wilt be full of uncertainty as to the manner of serving him; finding doubts and difficulties on every side, and not seeing any way to escape.

Yea, if thine eye be not single, if thou seek any of the things of earth, thou shalt be full of ungodliness and unrighteousness: thy desires, tempers, affections, being all out of course, being all dark, and vile, and vain. And thy conversation will be evil, as well as thy heart, not *seasoned with salt,* or meet to minister grace unto the hearers, but idle, unprofitable, corrupt, grievous to the holy Spirit of God.

8. Both *destruction and unhappiness are in thy ways;* for *the way of peace* hast thou not known. There is no peace, no settled, solid peace, for them that know not God. There is no true, nor lasting content for any, who do not seek him with their whole heart. While thou aimest at any of the things that perish, *all that cometh is vanity.* Yea, not only vanity, but *vexation of spirit,* and that both in the pursuit and the enjoyment also. Thou walkest indeed in a vain shadow, and disquietest thyself in vain. Thou walkest in darkness that may be felt. *Sleep on;* but thou canst not *take thy rest.* The dreams of life can give pain, and that thou knowest: but ease they cannot give. There is no rest in this world or the world to come, but only in God, the centre of spirits.

If the light which is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness! If the intention which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge

and love and peace, and which in fact, does so as long as it is single, as long as it aims at God alone: if this be darkness; if it aims at any thing beside God, and consequently cover the soul with darkness, instead of light, with ignorance and error, with sin and misery: O how great is that darkness! It is the very smoke which ascends out of the bottomless pit! It is the essential night, which reigns in the lowest deep, in the land of the shadow of death.

9. Therefore "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." If you do, it is plain your eye is evil: it is not singly fixed on God.

With regard to most of the commandments of God, whether relating to the heart or life, the Heathens of *Afric* or *America* stand much on a level, with those that are called Christians. The Christians observe them (a few only being excepted) very near as much as the Heathens. For instance: The generality of the natives of *England*, commonly called Christians, are as sober and as temperate, as the generality of the Heathens, near the *Cape of Good Hope*. And so the Dutch or French Christians, are as humble and as chaste, as the *Choctaw* or *Cherokee* Indians. It is not easy to say, when we compare the bulk of the nations in *Europe*, with those in *America*, whether the superiority lies on the one side or the other. At least, the American has not much the advantage. But we cannot affirm this, with regard to the command now before us. Here the Heathen has far the pre-eminence. He desires and seeks nothing more than plain food to eat, and plain raiment to put on. And he seeks this only from day to day. He reserves, he lays up nothing; unless it be, as much corn at one season of the year, as he will need before that season returns. This command, therefore, the Heathens, though they know it not, do constantly

and

and punctually observe. They *lay up for themselves no treasures upon earth*; no stores of purple or fine linen, of gold or silver, which either *moth or rust may corrupt*, or *thieves break through and steal*. But how do the Christians observe, what they profess to receive as a command of the most high God? Not at all; not in any degree; no more than if no such command had ever been given to man. Even the good Christians, as they are accounted by others as well as themselves, pay no manner of regard thereto. It might as well be still hid in its original Greek, for any notice they take of it. In what Christian city do you find one man of five hundred, who makes the least scruple, of laying up just as much treasure as he can? Of increasing his goods just as far as he is able? There are indeed those who would not do this unjustly; there are many who will neither rob or steal; and some, who will not defraud his neighbour; nay, who will not gain, either by his ignorance or necessity. But this is quite another point. Even these do not scruple the thing but the manner of it. They do not scruple the *laying up treasures upon earth*; but the laying them up by dishonesty. They do not start at disobeying Christ, but at a breach of Heathen morality. So that even these honest men do no more obey this command, than a highwayman or a house-breaker. Nay, they never designed to obey it. From their youth up, it never entered in o their thoughts. They were bred up by their Christian parents, masters, and friends, without any instruction at all concerning it: unless it were this, To break it as soon, and as much as they could, and to continue breaking it to their live's end.

10. There is no one instance of spiritual infatuation in the world, which is more amazing than this. Most of these very men read, or hear the Bible read, many of them every Lord's-day. They have read or heard these words an hundred times,

and yet never suspect that they are themselves condemned thereby, any more than by those which forbid parents to offer up their sons or daughters unto Moloch.

O that God would speak to these miserable self-deceivers, with his own voice, his mighty voice ! That they may at last awake out of the snare of the devil, and the scales may fall from their eyes !

11. Do you ask, what it is to lay up *treasures on earth* ? It will be needful to examine this thoroughly. And let us, first, observe, what is not forbidden in this command, that we may then clearly discern, what is.

We are not forbidden in this command, first, to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," to provide wherewith we may *render unto all their due*, whatsoever they can justly demand of us. So far from it, that we are taught of God, to *owe no man any thing*. We ought therefore to use all diligence in our calling, in order to owe no man any thing : this being no other than a plain law of common justice, which our Lord came *not to destroy but to fulfil*.

Neither, secondly, does he here forbid the providing for ourselves, such things as are needful for the body ; a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on. Yea, it is our duty, so far as God puts it into our power, to provide these things also ; to the end we may *eat our own bread*, and be *burdensome to no man*.

Nor yet are we forbidden, thirdly, to provide for our children, and for those of our own household. This also it is our duty to do, even upon principles of heathen morality. Every man ought to provide the plain necessities of life, both for his own wife and children ; and to put them into a capacity of providing these for themselves, when he is gone hence and is no more seen. I say, of providing *these*, the plain necessities of life, not delicacies, not superfluities : and that by their *diligent labour* ;

labour; for it is no man's duty to furnish them any more than himself, with the means either of luxury or idleness. But if any man provide not thus far for his own children, (as well as for *the widows of his own house*; of whom primarily St. Paul is speaking, in those well known words to Timothy :) *He hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, or heathen.

Lastly, We are not forbidden in these words, to lay up from time to time, what is needful for the carrying on our worldly business, in such a measure and degree, as is sufficient to answer the foregoing purposes: in such a measure, as first, to owe no man any thing; secondly, to procure for ourselves the necessities of life; and thirdly, to furnish those of our own house with them while we live, and with the means of procuring them when we are gone to God.

12. We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what that is which is forbidden here. It is, The designedly procuring more of this world's goods, than will answer the foregoing purposes: the labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase of gold and silver; the laying up any more than these ends require, is what is here expressly and absolutely forbidden. If the words have any meaning at all, it must be this; for they are capable of no other. Consequently, whoever he is, that owing no man any thing, and having food and raiment for himself and his household, together with a sufficiency to carry on his worldly business, so far as answers these reasonable purposes: whoever, I say, being already in these circumstances, seeks a still larger portion on earth, he lives in an open habitual denial of the Lord that bought him. *He hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an African or American infidel.*

13. Hear ye this, all ye that dwell in the world, and love the world wherein ye dwell. Ye may be

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highly esteemed of men; but ye are *an abomination in the sight of God*. How long shall your souls cleave to the dust? How long will ye load yourselves with thick clay? When will ye awake and see, that the open, speculative Heathens are nearer the kingdom of heaven than you? When will ye be persuaded to chuse the better part; that which cannot be taken away from you? When will ye seek only to *lay up treasures in heaven*, renouncing, dreading, abhorring all other? If you aim at *laying up treasures on earth*, you are not barely losing your time, and spending your strength for that which is not bread: for what is the fruit if you succeed? You have murdered your own soul. You have extinguished the last spark of spiritual life therein. Now indeed, in the midst of life you are in death. You are a living man, but a dead Christian. "For where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Your heart is sunk into the dust; your soul cleaveth to the ground. Your affections are set, not on things above, but on things of the earth; on poor husks that may poison, but cannot satisfy an everlasting spirit, made for God. Your love, your joy, your desire are all placed on the things which perish in the using. You have thrown away the treasure in heaven: God and Christ are lost. You have gained riches and hell fire.

14. "O how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" When our Lord's disciples were astonished at his speaking thus, he was so far from retracting it that he repeated the same important truth, in stronger terms than before. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." How hard is it for them whose every word is applauded, not to be wise in their own eyes! How hard for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men! How hard not to seek happiness

happinefs in their riches, or in things dependent upon them; in gratifying the defire of the flefh, the defire of the eye, or the pride of life! O ye rich, how can ye efcape the damnation of hell?—Only with God all things are poffible.

15. And even if you do not fucceed, what is the fruit of your *endeavouring* to lay up treasures on earth? *They that will be rich* (οἱ βεβόημενοι πλετεῖν, they that defire, that endeavour after it, whether they fucceed or no) *fall into a temptation and a fnare, a gin, a trap of the devil, and into many foolifh and hurtful lufhs*; ἐπιθυμίας ἀνοήτους, defires with which reafon hath nothing to do; fuch as properly belong, not to rational and immortal beings, but only to the brute-beafhs, which have no underftanding; *which drown men in deftruction and perdition*, in prefent and eternal mifery. Let us but open our eyes, and we may daily fee the melancholy proofs of this: men, who defiring, refolving to be rich, *coveting after money, the root of all evil, have already pierced themfelves through with many forrors*, and anticipated the hell to which they are going.

The cautiousnefs with which the Apoftle here fpeaks, is highly obfervable. He does not affirm this abfolutely of *the rich*; for a man may poffibly be rich, without any fault of his, by an over-ruling Providence, preventing his own choice. But he affirms it of βεβόημενοι πλετεῖν, *Those who defire or feek to be rich*. Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always *drown men in deftruction and perdition*. But the *defire of riches* does: thofe who calmly defire and deliberately feek to attain them, whether they do, in fact, gain the world or no, do infallibly lofe their own fouls. Thefe are they, that fell him who bought them with his blood, for a few pieces of gold or filver. Thefe enter into a covenant with death and hell: and their covenant fhall ftand. For they are daily making them-
felves

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selves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

16. O who shall warn this generation of vipers, to flee from the wrath to come! Not those who lie at their gate or cringe at their feet, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their tables. Not those who court their favour or fear their frown; none of those who mind earthly things. But if there be a Christian upon earth, if there be a man who hath overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and fears none but him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell: thou O Man of God, speak and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet. Cry aloud and shew these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand. It may be, one in a thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust; may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.

17. And if it should be, that one of these, by the mighty power of God, awoke and asked, What must I do to be saved? The answer, according to the Oracles of God, is clear, full and express. God doth not say to thee, *Sell all that thou hast*. Indeed he who seeth the hearts of men, saw it needful to enjoin this in one peculiar case, that of the *young, rich Ruler*. But he never laid it down for a general rule, to all rich men, in all succeeding generations. His general direction is, first, *Be not high-minded*. God seeth not as man seeth. He esteems thee not for thy riches, for thy grandeur or equipage, for any qualification or accomplishment, which is directly or indirectly owing to thy wealth, which can be bought, or procured thereby. All these are with him as dung and dross: let them be so with thee also. Beware thou think not thyself to be one jot wiser or better for all these things. Weigh thyself in another balance; estimate thyself only by the measure of faith and love
which

which God hath given thee. If thou hast more of the knowledge and love of God than he, thou art on this account and no other, wiser and better, more valuable and honourable than Him, who is with the dogs of thy flock. But if thou hast not this treasure, thou art more foolish, more vile, more truly contemptible, I will not say, than the lowest servant under thy roof, but than the beggar laid at thy gate, full of sores.

18. Secondly, *Trust not in uncertain riches.* Trust not in them for help: and trust not in them for happiness.

First, Trust not in them for help. Thou art miserably mistaken, if thou lookest for this in gold or silver. These are no more able to set thee *above the world*, than to set thee above the devil. Know that both the world and the prince of this world laugh at all such preparations against them. These will little avail in the day of trouble: even if they remain in the trying hour. But it is not certain, that they will: for how oft do they *make themselves wings and fly away*? But if not, what support will they afford, even in the ordinary troubles of life? The desire of thy eyes, the wife of thy youth, thy son, thine only son, or the friend which was as thy own soul, is taken away at a stroke. Will thy riches re-animate the breathless clay, or call back its late inhabitant?—Will they secure thee from sickness, diseases, pain? Do these visit the poor only? Nay; he that feeds thy flocks or tills thy ground, has less sickness and pain than thou. He is more rarely visited by these unwelcome guests: and if they come there at all, they are more easily driven away from the little cot, than from “the cloud-topped palaces.” And during the time that thy body is chastened with pain, or consumes away with pining sickness, how do thy treasures help thee? Let the poor Heathen answer.

*Ut lippum picta tabula, fomenta podagrum,
Auriculas citharæ collecta sorde dolentes.*

19. But there is at hand a greater trouble than all these. *Thou art to die. Thou art to sink into dust; to return to the ground from which thou wast taken, to mix with common clay. Thy body is to go to the earth as it was, while thy spirit returns to God that gave it. And the time draws on: the years slide away with a swift though silent pace. Perhaps your day is far spent: the noon of life is past, and the evening shadows begin to rest upon you. You feel in yourselves sure approaching decay. The springs of life wear away apace. Now what help in your riches? Do they sweeten death? Do they endear that solemn hour? Quite the reverse, "O death how bitter art thou, to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions?" How unacceptable to him is that awful sentence, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee!"—Or will they prevent the unwelcome stroke, or protract the dreadful hour? Can they deliver your soul that it should not see death? Can they restore the years that are past? Can they add to your appointed time, a month, a day an hour, a moment?—Or will the good things you have chosen for your portion here, follow you over the great gulph? Not so: naked came you into this world; naked must you return.*

*Linquenda tellus, & domus & placens
Uxor: nec harum quas seris arborum
Te præter invisam cupressum,
Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.*

Surely were not these truths too plain to be *observed*, because they are too plain to be *denied*, no man that is to die could possibly *trust*, for help, in *uncertain riches*.

20. And trust not in them for happiness. For here also they will be found *deceitful upon the weights*. Indeed this every reasonable man may infer,

infer, from what has been observed already. For if neither thousands of gold and silver, nor any of the advantages or pleasures purchased thereby, can prevent our being miserable, it evidently follows, they cannot make us happy. What happiness can they afford to him, who in the midst of all is constrained to cry out,

To my new Courts sad Thought does still repair,
And round my gilded Roof hangs hovering Care.

Indeed experience is here so full, strong, and undeniable, that it makes all other arguments needless. Appeal we therefore to fact. Are the rich and great, the only happy men? And is each of them more or less happy, in proportion to his measure of riches? Are they happy at all? I had well nigh said, they are of all men most miserable! Rich man, for once, speak the truth from thy heart. Speak, both for thyself, and for thy brethren.

“ Amidst our plenty something still---
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!
That cruel something unpossess
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.”

Yea, and so it will, till thy wearisome days of vanity are shut up in the night of death.

Surely then, to trust in riches for happiness, is the greatest folly of all that are under the sun! Are you not convinced of this? Is it possible you should still expect to find happiness in money, or all it can procure? What! Can silver and gold, eating and drinking, and horses, and servants, and glittering apparel, and diversions and pleasures (as they are called) make thee happy? They can as soon make thee immortal.

21. These are all dead show. Regard them not. *Trust thou in the living God.* So shalt thou be safe under the shadow of the Almighty; his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler. He is a very present help in time of trouble; such an help as can never fail. Then shalt thou say, if
all

all thy other friends die, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper!" He shall remember thee when thou liest sick upon thy bed: when vain is the help of man, when all the things of the earth can give no support, he will "*make all thy bed in thy sickness.*" He will sweeten thy pain; the consolations of God shall cause thee to clap thy hands in the flames. And even when this house of earth is well nigh shaken down, when it is just ready to drop into the dust, he will teach thee to say, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ."

O trust in him for happiness as well as for help. All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust in *him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy*, παρίχοντι πλουσίως πάντα ἡς ἀπόλαυσιν. Who of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that receiving them as his gift and as pledges of his love, we may *enjoy all* that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all, while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand, into all he bestows on his thankful children: who having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all and above all.

22. Thirdly, Seek not to *increase in goods.* "Lay not up for thyself treasures upon earth." This is a flat, positive command, full as clear, as "Thou shalt not commit adultery." How then is it possible for a rich man to grow richer, without denying the Lord that bought him? Yea, how can any man, who has already the necessities of life, gain or aim at more, and be guiltless? "Lay not up, saith our Lord, treasures upon earth." If in spite of this, you do and will lay up, money or goods, what "moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break

break through and steal:" if you will add house to house, or field to field, why do you call yourself a Christian? You do not obey Jesus Christ. You do not design it. Why do you name yourself by the name? "Why call ye me Lord, Lord," saith he himself, "and do not the things which I say?"

23. If you ask, "But what must we do with our goods, seeing we have more than we have occasion to use, if we must not lay them up? Must we throw them away?" I answer, If you threw them into the sea, if you were to cast them into the fire and consume them, they would be better bestowed than they are now. You cannot find so mischievous a manner of throwing them away, as either the laying them up for your posterity, or the laying them out upon yourselves, in folly and superfluity. Of all possible methods of *throwing them away*, these two are the very worst; the most opposite to the gospel of Christ, and the most pernicious to your own soul.

How pernicious to your own soul the latter of these is, has been excellently shewn by a late Writer. "If we waste our money we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, but we do ourselves this farther harm, we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves: because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, which as Christians we are obliged to renounce."

"As wit and fine parts cannot be only trifled away, but will expose those that have them to greater follies: so money cannot be only trifled away, but if it is not used according to Reason and Religion, will make people live a more silly and extravagant life, than they would have done without it: if therefore you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the

hurt of yourself. You act like one that refuses the cordial to his sick friend, which he cannot drink himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money; if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial. If you spend it upon yourself in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind."

"In using riches where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging foolish passions and supporting a vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our heart. They are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature. They are all of them the support of something, that ought not to be supported. They are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart, which relishes divine things. They are so many weights upon our mind, that make us less able and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above."

"So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects: to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, to the making us unable to follow the sublime doctrines of the gospel. It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves."

24. Equally inexcusable are those, who *lay up* what they do not need for any reasonable purposes.

"If a man had hands and eyes and feet that he could give to those that wanted them; if he should lock them up in a chest, instead of giving them to his brethren, that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather chuse to amuse himself with hoarding them up, than entitle himself to an eternal reward,

ward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?"

"Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want it for their necessary uses, we are not far from the cruelty of him, that causes rather to hoard up the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we chuse to lay it up, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness, that rather chuses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself for ever blessed by giving them to those that want them."

25. May not this be another reason why rich men shall so hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven? A vast majority of them are under a curse, under the peculiar curse of God: inasmuch as in the general tenor of their lives, they are not only robbing God continually, embezzling and wasting their Lord's goods, and by that very means corrupting their own souls: but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked, wronging the widow and the fatherless, and making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction and distress, which they may, but do not remove. Yea, doth not the blood of all those who perish for want, of what they either lay up, or lay out needlessly, cry against them from the earth? O what account will they give, to him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead!

26. The true way of employing what you do not want yourselves, you may, fourthly learn from those words of our Lord, which are the counterpart of what went before: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." Put out whatever thou canst spare, upon better security than this world can afford. Lay up thy treasures in the bank of heaven: and God shall restore them in that day. "He that

hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and look what he layeth out it shall be paid him again." Place that, saith he, unto my account. Howbeit! "thou owest me thine own self also!"

Give to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart, and write, "So much given to God." For "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

This is the part of a *faithful and wise steward*. Not, to sell either his houses or lands, or principal stock, be it more or less, unless some peculiar circumstance should require it; and not to desire or endeavour to increase it, any more than to squander it away in vanity: but to employ it wholly to those wise and reasonable purposes, for which his Lord has lodged it in his hands. The wise steward, after having provided his own household, with what is needful for life and godliness, *makes himself friends with all that remains from time to time of the "mammon of unrighteousness; that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting habitations:"* that whensoever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they who were before carried into Abraham's bosom, after having eaten his bread, and worn the fleece of his flock, and praised God for the consolation, may welcome him into paradise, and to *the house of God, eternal in the heavens.*

27. We charge you, therefore, who are rich in this world, as having authority from our great Lord and Master, ἀγαθοεργεῖν *to be habitually doing good*, to live in a course of good works, "Be ye merciful as your Father which is in heaven is merciful," who doeth good and ceaseth not. *Be ye merciful;—*"How far?"—*After your power*, with all the ability which God giveth. Make this your only measure of doing good, not any beggarly maxims or customs of the world. *We charge you to be rich in good works; as you have much, to give plentifully.* Freely ye have received; freely give; so as to lay up no treasure but in heaven. Be ye
ready

ready to distribute, to every one according to his necessity. Disperse abroad, give to the poor; deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked with a garment, entertain the stranger, carry or send relief to them that are in prison. Heal the sick; not by miracle, but through the blessing of God upon your seasonable support. Let the blessing of him that was ready to perish through pining want, come upon thee. Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart sing for joy.

28. We exhort you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to *be willing to communicate*: *κοινωνήσας ἑαυτοῖς*. To be of the same spirit (though not in the same outward state) with those believers of ancient times, who *remained steadfast in τῇ κοινωνίᾳ*, in that blessed and holy fellowship, wherein *none said, that any thing was his own, but they had all things common*. Be a steward, a faithful and wise steward, of God and of the poor; differing from them in these two circumstances only, That your wants are first supplied, out of the portion of your Lord's goods which remains in your hands, and that you have the blessedness of giving. Thus *lay up for yourselves a good foundation*, not in the world, which now is, but rather "for the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life." The great foundation indeed of all the blessings of God, whether temporal or eternal, is the Lord Jesus Christ, his righteousness and blood, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered for us. And *other foundation, in this sense, can no man lay*; no not an Apostle, no not an angel from heaven. But through his merits, whatever we do in his name, is a foundation for a good reward, in the day when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour:" Therefore, "labour" thou, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." Therefore "what-

foever thy hand now findeth to do, do it with thy might." Therefore let

"No fair occasion pass unheeded by;
Snatching the golden moments as they fly,
Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity!"

"By patient continuance in well-doing seek thou for glory and honour and immortality." In a constant, zealous performance of all good works, wait thou for that happy hour when *the King shall say*, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

S E R M O N XXVIII.

DISCOURSE the NINTH, upon our LORD's
SERMON on the MOUNT.

MATTHEW VI. 24—34.

"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

"Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

"What

- “ Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature ?
- “ And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :
- “ And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- “ Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?
- “ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? Or, What shall we drink ? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ?
- “ (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
- “ But first seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.
- “ Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself : sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

1. **I**T is recorded of the nations whom the King of Assyria, after he had carried Israel away into captivity, placed in the cities of Samaria, that “ They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.” “ These nations,” saith the inspired Writer, “ feared the Lord,” performed an outward service to him, (a plain proof that they had a fear of God, though not according to knowledge) “ and served their graven images, both their children and their children’s children ; as did their fathers, so did they unto this day,” 2 Kings xvii. 33, &c.

How nearly does the practice of most modern Christians resemble this of the ancient heathens ? *They fear the Lord* : they also perform an outward service to him, and thereby shew, they have some
fear

fear of God; but they likewise *serve their own gods*. There are those who *teach them* (as there were who taught the Assyrians) *the manner of the God of the land*; the God whose name the country bears to this day, and who was once worshipped there with an holy worship. *Howbeit*, they do not serve him alone; they do not fear him enough for this. But *every nation maketh gods of their own: every nation in the cities wherein they dwell. These nations fear the Lord*, they have not laid aside the outward form of worshipping him. But *they serve their graven images*, silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Money, pleasure, and praise, the goods of this world, more than divide their service with the God of Israel. This is the manner both of "their children and their children's children; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

2. But although speaking in a loose way, after the common manner of men, those poor heathens were said to *fear the Lord*, yet we may observe the Holy Ghost immediately adds, speaking according to the truth and real nature of things, "They fear not the Lord, neither do after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob: with whom the Lord made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor serve them.—But the Lord your God ye shall fear, and he shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies."

The same judgment is past, by the unerring Spirit of God, and indeed by all, the eyes of whose understanding he hath opened, to discern the things of God, upon these poor Christians, commonly so called. If we speak according to the truth and real nature of things, "they fear not the Lord, neither do they serve him." For they do not "after the covenant the Lord hath made with them, neither after the law and commandment which he hath commanded them, saying, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

serve." "They serve other gods unto this day." And *no man can serve two masters.*

3. How vain is it for any man to aim at this? To attempt the serving of two masters. Is it not easy to foresee, what must be the unavoidable consequences of such an attempt? "Either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." The two parts of this sentence, although separately proposed, are to be understood in connexion with each other. For the latter part is a consequence of the former. He will naturally *hold to* him whom he loves. He will so cleave to him, as to perform to him a willing, faithful, and diligent service. And in the mean time, he will so far, at least, *despise* the master he hates, as to have little regard to his commands, and to obey them, if at all, in a slight and careless manner. Therefore, whatsoever the wise men of the world may suppose, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

4. *Mammon* was the name of one of the heathen gods, who was supposed to preside over riches. It is here understood of riches themselves; gold or silver, or in general money: and by a common figure of speech, of all that may be purchased thereby; such as ease, honour, and sensual pleasure.

But what are we here to understand, by *serving God*? And what, by *serving mammon*?

We cannot *serve* God, unless we believe in him. This is the only true foundation of serving him. Therefore, the believing in God, as *reconciling the world to himself* through *Christ Jesus*, the believing in him, as a loving, pardoning God, is the first great branch of his service.

And, thus to believe in God implies, to *trust* in him as our strength, without whom we can do nothing, who every moment endues us with power from on high, without which it is impossible to please him: as our help, our only help in time of trouble, who compasseth us about with songs of deliverance;

deliverance; as our shield, our defender, and the lifter up of our head above all our enemies that are round about us.

It implies, to trust in God as our happiness; as the center of spirits, the only rest of our souls; the only good who is adequate to all our capacities, and sufficient to satisfy all the desires he hath given us.

It implies (what is nearly allied to the other) to trust in God, as our end; to have an eye to him in all things; to use all things only as means of enjoying him; wheresoever we are, or whatsoever we do, to see Him that is invisible, looking on us well pleased, and refer all things to him in Christ Jesus.

5. Thus to believe, is the first thing we are to understand by *serving God*. The second is, To love him.

Now, to love God in the manner the scripture describes, in the manner God himself requires of us, is to love him as the One God; that is, "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength:" it is to desire God alone for his own sake; and nothing else, but with reference to him: to rejoice in God; to delight in the Lord; not only to seek but find happiness in him; to enjoy God as the chiefest among ten thousand; to rest in him, as our God and our all. In a word, to have such a possession of God, as makes us always happy.

6. A third thing we are to understand by *serving God*, is, To resemble or imitate him.

So the ancient Father, *Optimus Dei Cultus, imitari quem colis*; It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate him you worship.

We here speak, of imitating or resembling him in the spirit of our minds. For here the true Christian imitation of God begins. God is a spirit; and they that imitate or resemble him, must do it in spirit and in truth.

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Now God is love. Therefore they who resemble him in the spirit of their minds, are transformed into the same image. They are merciful, even as he is merciful. Their soul is all love. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tender-hearted: and that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Yea, they are, like him, loving unto every man, and their mercy extends to all his works.

7. One thing more we are to understand by *serving God*, and that is the obeying him; the glorifying him with our bodies, as well as with our spirits; the keeping his outward commandments: the zealously doing whatever he hath enjoined, the carefully avoiding whatever he hath forbidden: the performing all the ordinary actions of life, with a single eye and a pure heart; offering them in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ.

8. Let us consider now, what we are to understand, on the other hand, by *serving mammon*. And first, it implies, the *trusting* in riches, in money, or the things purchaseable thereby, as our strength, the means whereby we shall perform, whatever cause we have in hand: the trusting in them as our help, by which we look to be comforted in, or delivered out of trouble.

It implies, the trusting in the world for happiness; the supposing that *a man's life consisteth* (the comfort of his life) *in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*: the looking for rest, in the things that are seen; for content in outward plenty; the expecting that satisfaction in the things of the world, which can never be found out of God.

And if we do this, we cannot but make the world our end; the ultimate end, if not of all, at least of many of our undertakings, many of our actions and designs: in which we shall aim only at an increase of wealth; at the obtaining pleasure
or

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or praise; at the gaining a larger measure of temporal things, without any reference to things eternal.

9. The *serving mammon* implies, secondly, Loving the world: desiring it for its own sake; the placing our joy in the things thereof, and setting our hearts upon them: the seeking (what indeed it is impossible we should find) our happiness therein; the resting with the whole weight of our souls, upon the staff of this broken reed; although daily experience shews it cannot support, but will only *enter into our hand and pierce it*.

10. To resemble, to be conformed to the world, is a third thing we are to understand by *serving mammon*: to have not only designs, but desires, tempers, affections suitable to those of the world: to be of an earthly, sensual mind, chained down to the things of earth: to be self-willed, inordinate lovers of ourselves; to think highly of our own attainments; to desire and delight in the praise of men: to fear, shun, and abhor reproach: to be impatient of reproof, easy to be provoked, and swift to return evil for evil.

11. To *serve mammon* is lastly, to obey the world, by outward conforming to its maxims and customs; to walk as other men walk, in the common road, in the broad, smooth, beaten path; to be in the fashion, to follow a multitude; to do like the rest of our neighbours; that is, to do the will of the flesh and the mind, to gratify our appetites and inclinations: to sacrifice to ourselves; aim at our own ease and pleasure, in the general course both of our words and actions.

Now what can be more undeniably clear, than that we cannot thus *serve God and mammon*?

12. Does not every man see, that he cannot comfortably serve both? That to trim between God and the world, is the sure way to be disappointed in both, and to have no rest either in one or the other? How uncomfortable a condition must he be in, who having the fear, but not the love of God,
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who serving him, but not with all his heart, has only the toils and not the joys of Religion? He has Religion enough to make him miserable, but not enough to make him happy: his Religion will not let him enjoy the world; and the world will not let him enjoy God. So that by halting between both he loses both, and has no peace either in God or the world.

13. Does not every man see, that he cannot serve both, *consistently* with himself? What more glaring inconsistency can be conceived, than must continually appear in his whole behaviour, who is endeavouring to obey both these masters, striving to *serve God and mammon*? He is indeed a *sinner that goeth two ways*; one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand, and pulling down with the other. He loves sin, and he hates it: he is always seeking, and yet always fleeing from God. He would and he would not. He is not the same man, for one day, no, not for an hour together. He is a motly mixture of all sorts of contrarieties; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one. O, be consistent with thyself, one way or the other. Turn to the right hand or to the left. If *mammon* be God, serve thou him; if the *Lord*, then serve him. But never think of serving either at all, unless it be with thy whole heart.

14. Does not every reasonable, every thinking man see, that he cannot *possibly* serve God and *mammon*? Because there is the most absolute contrariety, the most irreconcilable enmity between them. The contrariety between the most opposite things on earth, between fire and water, darkness and light, vanishes into nothing, when compared to the contrariety between God and *mammon*. So that in whatsoever respect you serve the one, you necessarily renounce the other. Do you believe in God through Christ? Do you trust in him as your strength, your help, your shield, and your exceeding

ceeding great reward? As your happiness? your end in all, above all things? Then you cannot *trust* in riches. It is absolutely impossible you should, so long as you have this faith in God. Do you thus *trust in riches*? Then you have denied the faith. You do not trust in the living God. Do you *love* God? Do you seek and find happiness in him? Then you cannot love the world; neither the things of the world. You are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you. Do you *love the world*? Are your affections set on things beneath? Do you seek happiness in earthly things? Then it is impossible you should love God. Then the love of the Father is not in you. Do you *resemble* God? Are you transformed by the renewal of your mind, into the image of him that created you? Then you cannot be conformed to the present world. You have renounced all its affections and lusts. Are you conformed to the world? Does your soul still bear the image of the earthly? Then you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind. You do not bear the image of the heavenly. Do you *obey* God? Are you zealous to do his will on earth as the angels do in heaven? Then it is impossible you should *obey mammon*. Then you set the world at open defiance. You trample its customs and maxims under foot, and will neither follow nor be led by them. Do you follow the world? Do you please men? Do you please yourself? Then you cannot be a servant of God. You are of your master and father, the devil.

15. Therefore, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt lay aside all thoughts of obeying two masters, of serving God and mammon. Thou shalt propose to thyself no end, no help, no happiness, but God. Thou shalt seek nothing in earth or heaven but him: thou shalt aim at nothing, but to know, to love and enjoy him. And because this is all your business below, the only view you can reasonably have, the

the one design you are to pursue in all things; "therefore I say unto you" (as our Lord continues his discourse) "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." A deep and weighty direction, which it imports us well to consider and thoroughly to understand.

16. Our Lord does not here require, that we should be utterly without thought, even touching the concerns of this life. A giddy, careless temper is at the farthest remove from the whole Religion of Jesus Christ. Neither does he require us to be *slothful in business*, to be slack and dilatory therein. This likewise is contrary to the whole spirit and genius of his Religion. A Christian abhors sloth as much as drunkenness, and flees from idleness as he does from adultery. He well knows, that there is one kind of thought and care, with which God is well-pleased; which is absolutely needful for the due performance of those outward works, unto which the Providence of God has called him.

It is the will of God, that every man should labour to *eat his own bread*: yea, and that every man should provide for his own, for them of his own household. It is likewise his will, that we should *owe no man any thing*, but *provide things honest in the sight of all men*. But this cannot be done, without taking some thought, without having some care upon our minds: yea, often, not without long and serious thought, not without much and earnest care. Consequently, this care, to provide for ourselves and our household, this Thought, How to render to all their dues, our blessed Lord does not condemn. Yea, it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

It is good and acceptable to God, that we should so take thought concerning whatever we have in hand, as to have a clear comprehension of what we are about to do, and to plan our business before

we enter upon it. And it is right that we should carefully consider from time to time, what steps we are to take therein; as well as that we should prepare all things before hand, for the carrying it on in the most effectual manner. This care, termed by some, "The care of the head," it was by no means our Lord's design to condemn.

17. What he here condemns is, "The care of the heart:" the anxious, uneasy care: the care that hath torment; all such care as does hurt, either to the soul or body. What he forbids is, That care which sad experience shews, wastes the blood and drinks up the spirits: which anticipates all the misery it fears, and comes to torment us before the time. He forbids only that care, which poisons the blessings of to-day, by fear of what may be to-morrow; which cannot enjoy the present plenty, through apprehensions of future want. This care is not only a sore disease, a grievous sickness of soul, but also an heinous offence against God, a sin of the deepest dye. It is an high affront to the gracious Governor and wise Disposer of all things; necessarily implying, that the great Judge does not do right, that he does not order all things well. It plainly implies, That he is wanting, either in wisdom, if he does not know what things we stand in need of: or in goodness, if he does not provide those things, for all who put their trust in him. Beware therefore that you take not thought in this sense: be ye anxiously careful for nothing. Take no uneasy thought: this is a plain, sure rule, *Uneasy care is unlawful care.* With a single eye to God do all that in you lies, to provide things honest in the sight of all men. And then give up all into better hands: leave the whole event to God.

18. "Take no thought," of this kind, no uneasy thought even "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat,

meat, and the body than raiment? If then God gave you life, the greater gift, will he not give you food to sustain it? If he hath given you the body, how can ye doubt, but he will give you raiment to cover it? More especially, if you give yourselves up to him, and serve him with your whole heart, "Behold," see before your eyes, "the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;" and yet they lack nothing, "yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Ye that are creatures capable of God? Are ye not of more account in the eyes of God? Of a higher rank in the scale of beings? "And which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" What profit have you then for this anxious thought? It is every way fruitless and unavailing.

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Have ye not a daily reproof, wherever you turn your eyes? "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," is cut down, burnt up, and seen no more, "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" You, whom he made to endure for ever and ever, to be pictures of his own eternity! Ye are indeed of little faith. Otherwise ye could not doubt of his love and care, no, not for a moment.

19. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat," if we lay up no treasure upon earth? "What shall we drink," if we serve God with all our strength, if our eye be singly fixed on him? "Wherewithal shall we be clothed," if we are not conformed to the world, if we disoblige those by whom we might be profited? "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek," the heathens who know not God. But ye are sensible, "your hea-
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venly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." And he hath pointed out to you an infallible way, of being constantly supplied therewith. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

20. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Before ye give place to any other thought or care, let it be your concern, That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "gave his only begotten Son, to the end that believing in him, ye might not perish but have everlasting life," may reign in your heart, may manifest himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there: that he may "cast down every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Let God have the sole dominion over you. Let him reign without a rival. Let him possess all your heart, and rule alone. Let him be your one desire, your joy, your love: so that all that is within you may continually cry out, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

"Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the heart. And what is righteousness but love? The love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus Christ, and producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, patience, deadness to the world; and every right disposition of heart, toward God and toward man. And by these it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report; whatsoever works of faith and labour of love are acceptable to God and profitable to man.

His righteousness: this is all *his* righteousness still: it is his own free gift to us, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, through whom alone it is purchased for us: and it is his *work*: it is he alone

alone that worketh it in us, by the inspiration of his holy Spirit.

21. Perhaps the well observing this may give light to some other Scriptures, which we have not always so clearly understood. St. Paul speaking in his epistle to the Romans, concerning the unbelieving Jews, saith, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." They were *ignorant of God's righteousness*, not only of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to every believer, whereby all his sins are blotted out, and he is reconciled to the favour of God : but (which seems here to be more immediately understood) they were ignorant of that inward righteousness, of that holiness of heart, which is with the utmost propriety termed, *God's righteousness*, as being both his own free gift through Christ, and his own work, by his almighty Spirit. And because they were ignorant of this, they *went about to establish their own righteousness*. They laboured to establish that outside righteousness, which might very properly be termed *their own*. For neither was it wrought by the Spirit of God, nor was it owned or accepted of him. They might work this themselves, by their own natural strength : and when they had done, it was a stink in his nostrils. And yet trusting in this, they would "not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." Yea, they hardened themselves against that faith, whereby alone it was possible to attain it. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Christ, when he said, *It is finished*, put an end to the law, to the law of external rites and ceremonies, that he might, "bring in a better righteousness," through his blood, by that one oblation of himself once offered, even the image of God, into the inmost soul of every one that believeth.

22. Nearly related to these are those words of the Apostle, in his epistle to the Philippians. "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ," an entrance into his everlasting kingdom, "and be found in him," [believing in him,] "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"—"Not having my own righteousness which is of the law;" a barely external righteousness, the outside Religion I formerly had, when I hoped to be accepted of God, because I was, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."—"But that which is through the faith of Christ, that righteousness which is of God by faith:" the holiness of heart, that renewal of the soul, in all its desires, tempers and affections, "which is of God:" it is the work of God and not of man, "by faith;" through the faith of Christ, through the revelation of Jesus Christ in us and by faith in his blood; whereby alone we obtain the remission of our sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

23. *Seek ye first this kingdom of God in your hearts, this righteousness, which is the gift and work of God, the image of God renewed in your souls: and all these things shall be added unto you: all things needful for the body; such a measure of all, as God sees most for the advancement of his kingdom. These shall be added, they shall be thrown in, over and above. In seeking the peace and the love of God, you shall not only find what you more immediately seek, even the kingdom that cannot be moved; but also what you seek not, not at all for its own sake, but, only in reference to the other. You shall find in your way to the kingdom all outward things, so far as they are expedient for you: this care God hath taken upon himself: cast you all your care upon him. He knoweth your wants: and whatsoever is lacking he will not fail to supply.*

24. "There-

24. "Therefore take no thought for the morrow." Not only, take ye no thought, how to lay up treasures on earth, how to increase in worldly substance; take no thought how to procure more food than you can eat, or more raiment than you can put on; or more money than is required from day to day, for the plain reasonable purposes of life: but take no *uneasy* thought even concerning those things which are absolutely needful for the body. Do not trouble yourself now, with thinking what you shall do at a season which is yet afar off. Perhaps that season will never come: or it will be no concern of yours: before then you will have passed through all the waves, and be landed in eternity. All those distant views do not belong to *you*, who are but a creature of a day. Nay, what have you to do with *the morrow*, more strictly speaking? Why should you perplex yourself without need? God provides for you to-day what is needful to sustain the life which he hath given you. It is enough: give yourself up into his hands: if you live another day, he will provide for that also.

25. Above all, do not make the care of future things, a pretence for neglecting present duty. This is the most fatal way of *taking thought for the morrow*. And how common is it among men? Many, if we exhort them to keep a conscience void of offence, to abstain from what they are convinced is evil, do not scruple to reply, "How then must we live? Must we not take care of ourselves and of our families?" And this they imagine to be a sufficient reason, for continuing in known, wilful sin. They say, and perhaps think, they would serve God now, were it not that they should by and by lose their bread. They would prepare for eternity; but they are afraid of wanting the necessities of life. So they serve the devil for a morsel of bread: they rush into hell, for fear of want; they throw away their poor souls, lest they should some
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time or other fall short, of what is needful for their bodies.

It is not strange that they who thus take the matter out of God's hand, should be so often disappointed of the very things they seek; that while they throw away heaven, to secure the things of earth, they lose the one, but do not gain the other. The jealous God, in the wise course of his Providence, frequently suffers this. So that they who will not cast their care on God, who taking thought for temporal things, have little concern for things eternal, lose the very portion which they have chosen. There is a visible blast on all their undertakings: whatsoever they do, it doth not prosper. Inasmuch, that after they have forsaken God for the world, they lose what they sought, as well as what they sought not. They fall short of the kingdom of God and his righteousness; nor yet are other things added unto them.

26. There is another way of *taking thought for the morrow*, which is equally forbidden in these words. It is impossible to *take thought* in a wrong manner, even with regard to spiritual things: to be so careful about what may be by and by, as to neglect what is now required at our hands. How insensibly do we slide into this, if we are not continually watching unto prayer? How easily are we carried away, in a kind of waking dream, projecting distant schemes, and drawing fine scenes in our own imagination! We think, what good we will do, when we are in such a place, or when such a time is come! How useful we will be, how plenteous in good works, when we are easier in our circumstances? How earnestly we will serve God, when once such an hinderance is out of the way.

Or, perhaps, you are now in heaviness of soul: God, as it were, hides his face from you. You see little of the light of his countenance; you cannot taste his redeeming love. In such a temper of mind,

mind, how natural is it to say, "O how will I praise God, when the light of his countenance shall be again lifted upon my soul? How will I exhort others to praise him, when his love is again shed abroad in my heart? Then I will do thus and thus: I will speak for God in all places: I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Then I will redeem the time. I will use to the uttermost every talent I have received." Do not believe thyself. Thou wilt not do it then, unless thou dost it now. "He that is faithful in that which is little," of whatsoever kind it be, whether it be worldly substance, or the fear or love of God, "will be faithful in that which is much." But if thou now hidest one talent in the earth, thou wilt then hide five: that is, if ever they are given; but there is small reason to expect they ever will. Indeed "unto him that hath," that is, uses what he hath, "shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But from him that hath not," that is, uses not the grace which he hath already received, whether in a larger or smaller degree, "shall be taken away even that which he hath."

27. And *take no thought* for the temptations of to-morrow. This also is a dangerous snare. Think not, "When such a temptation comes, what shall I do, how shall I stand? I feel, I have not power to resist: I am not able to conquer that enemy." Most true: you have not *now* the power which you do not *now* stand in need of. You are not able at *this time* to conquer that enemy! and at *this time* he does not assault you. With the grace you have now, you could not withstand the temptations which you have not. But when the temptation comes, the grace will come. In greater trials you will have greater strength. When sufferings abound, the consolations of God will in the same proportion abound also. So that in every situation, the grace of God will be sufficient for you. He doth not suffer you *to be tempted to-day, above that ye are able*

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able to bear. And "in every temptation he will make a way to escape." "As thy day, so thy strength shall be."

28. *Let the morrow therefore take thought for the things of itself;* that is, when the morrow comes, then think of it. Live thou to-day. Be it thy earnest care to improve the present hour. This is your own; and it is your all. The past is as nothing, as though it had never been. The future is nothing to you: it is not yours; perhaps it never will be. There is no depending on what is yet to come; for you "know not what a day may bring forth." Therefore live to-day: lose not an hour: use this moment: for it is your portion. "Who knoweth the things which have been before him, or which shall be after him under the sun?" The generations, that were from the beginning of the world, where are they now? Fled away: forgotten. They *were*; they lived their day; they were shook off the earth, as leaves from off their trees. They mouldered away into common dust. Another and another race succeeded; then they "followed the generation of their fathers, and shall never more see the light." Now is thy turn upon the earth. "Rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth. Enjoy the very, very now; by enjoying Him, "whose years fail not." Now let thine eye be singly fixed on Him, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Now give him thy heart: now stay thyself on Him: now be thou holy as He is holy. Now lay hold of the blessed opportunity of doing his acceptable and perfect will. Now "rejoice to suffer the loss of all things, so thou mayest win Christ."

29. Gladly suffer to-day, for his name's sake, whatsoever he permits this day to come upon thee. But look not at the sufferings of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Evil it is, speaking after the manner of men: whether it be reproach or want, pain or sickness. But in
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the language of God, all is blessing: "it is a precious balm," prepared by the wisdom of God, and variously dispensed among his children, according to the various sicknesses of their souls. And he gives in one day, sufficient for that day; proportioned to the want and strength of the patient. If therefore thou snatchest to-day what belongs to thee to-morrow; if thou addest this to what is given thee already, it will be more than thou canst bear: this is the way not to heal, but to destroy thy own soul. Take therefore just as much as he gives thee to-day: to-day do and suffer his will. To day give up thyself, thy body, soul, and spirit, to God, through Christ Jesus: desiring nothing, but that God may be glorified in all thou art, all thou dost, all thou sufferest: seeking nothing, but to know God, and his Son, Jesus Christ, through the eternal Spirit: pursuing nothing, but to love him, to serve him, and to enjoy him at this hour, and to all eternity!

Now unto God the Father, who hath made me and all the world; unto God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind; unto God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God: be honour, and praise, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever! Amen.

S E R M O N XXIX.

DISCOURSE the Tenth upon our LORD's
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. VII. 1—12.

- " Judge not, that ye be not judged.
- " For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
- " And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?
- " Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
- " Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.
- " Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.
- " Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
- " For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.
- " Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?
- " Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent?
- " If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?

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"Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets."

1. **O**UR blessed Lord, having now finished his main design, having first delivered the sum of true Religion, carefully guarded against those glosses of men, whereby they would make the Word of God of none effect: and having next, laid down Rules touching that right intention, which we are to preserve in all our inward actions: now proceeds to point out the main hinderances of this Religion, and concludes all with a suitable application.

2. In the fifth chapter our great Teacher has fully described inward Religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul, which constitute real Christianity; the tempers contained in that holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord;" the affections, which when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. In the sixth he has shewn, how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he declares is of no value with God: whereas whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, are in his sight of great price.

3. In the former part of this chapter he points out the most common and most fatal hinderances of this holiness. In the latter, he exhorts us by various motives, to break through all, and secure that prize of our high calling.

4. The first hinderance he cautions us against is judging. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Judge not others, that ye be not judged of the Lord, that ye bring not vengeance on your own

heads. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again:" a plain and equitable rule, whereby God permits you to determine for yourselves, in what manner he shall deal with you in the judgment of the great day.

5. There is no station of life, nor any period of time, from the hour of our first repenting and believing the gospel, till we are made perfect in love, wherein this caution is not needful for every child of God. For occasions of judging can never be wanting. And the temptations to it are innumerable: many whereof are so artfully disguised, that we fall into the sin, before we suspect any danger. And unspeakable are the mischiefs produced hereby; always to him that judges another: thus wounding his own soul, and exposing himself to the righteous judgment of God; and frequently to those who are judged, whose hands hang down, who are weakened and hindered in their course, if not wholly turned out of the way, and caused to draw back even to perdition. Yea, how often when this *root of bitterness springs up*, are *many defiled thereby*: by reason whereof the way of truth itself is evil spoken of, and that worthy name blasphemed whereby we are called.

6. Yet it does not appear, that our Lord designed this caution, only or chiefly for the Children of God: but rather for the children of the world, for the men who know not God. These cannot but hear of those, who are not of the world, who follow after the Religion above described: who endeavour to be humble, serious, gentle, merciful and pure in heart; who earnestly desire such measures of these holy tempers, as they have not yet attained: and wait for them in doing all good to all men, and patiently suffering evil. Whoever go but thus far, cannot be hid, no more than *a city set upon a hill*. And why do not those, who see their good works, glorify their Father which is in heaven?

Heaven? What excuse have they, for not treading in their steps? For not imitating their example, and being followers of them, as they are also of Christ? Why, in order to provide an excuse for themselves, they condemn those whom they ought to imitate. They spend their time in finding out their neighbours faults, instead of amending their own. They are so busied about others going out of the way, that they themselves never come into it at all: at least, never get forward, never go beyond a poor dead form of godliness without the power.

7. It is to these more especially that our Lord says, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye," the infirmities, the mistakes, the imprudence, the weakness of the children of God; "but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Thou considerest not the damnable impenitence, the satanic pride, the accursed self-will, the idolatrous love of the world, which are in thyself, and which make thy whole life an abomination to the Lord. Above all, with what supine carelessness and indifference art thou dancing over the mouth of hell? And "how then," with what grace, with what decency or modesty, "wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye," the excess of zeal for God, the extreme of self-denial, the too great disengagement from worldly cares and employments, the desire to be day and night in prayer, or hearing the words of eternal life? "And behold a beam is in thine own eye!" Not a mote, like one of these. "Thou hypocrite!" Who pretendest to care for others and hast no care for thy own soul! Who maketh a show of zeal for the cause of God, when in truth thou neither lovest nor fearest him! "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye." Cast out the beam of impenitence. Know myself. See and feel thyself a sinner. Feel, that thy inward parts are very wickedness, that thou art altogether corrupt and abominable, and that the wrath of God

abideth on thee. Cast out the beam of pride. Abhor thyself. Sink down as in the dust and ashes. Be more and more little and mean, and base and vile in thine own eyes. Cast out the beam of self-will. Learn what that meaneth, "If any man will come after me, let him renounce himself." Deny thyself and take up thy cross daily. Let thy whole soul cry out, "I came down from heaven," (for so thou didst, thou never-dying spirit, whether thou knowest it or no) "not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Cast out the beam of love of the world. Love not the world, neither the things of the world. Be thou crucified unto the world, and the world crucified unto thee. Only *use* the world, but *enjoy* God. Seek all thy happiness in him. Above all, cast out the grand beam, that supine carelessness and indifference. Deeply consider, that *one thing is needful*, the one thing which thou hast scarce ever thought of. Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulph! What art thou? A sinner born to die: a leaf driven before the wind: a vapour ready to vanish away: just appearing, and then scattered into air, to be no more seen! See this, "And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Then, if thou hast leisure from the concerns of thy own soul, thou shalt know how to correct thy brother also.

8. But what is properly the meaning of this word, *judge not*? What is the *judging* which is here forbidden? It is not the same as evil-speaking, although it is frequently joined therewith. Evil-speaking is, the relating any thing that is evil, concerning an absent person: whereas *judging* may indifferently refer, either to the absent or the present. Neither does it necessarily imply the speaking at all, but only the *thinking evil* of another. Not that all kind of thinking evil of others, is that *judging* which our Lord condemns. If I see one
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commit robbery or murder, or hear him blaspheme the name of God, I cannot refrain from thinking ill of the robber or murderer. Yet this is not evil *judging*: there is no sin in this, nor any thing contrary to tender affection.

9. The thinking of another, in a manner that is contrary to love, is that *judging* which is here condemned, and this may be of various kinds. For, first, we may think another to blame when he is not. We may lay to his charge (at least in our own mind) the things of which he is not guilty: the words which he has never spoke, or the actions which he has never done. Or we may think his manner of acting was wrong, although in reality it was not. And even where nothing can justly be blamed, either in the thing itself, or in the manner of doing it, we may suppose his intention was not good, and so condemn him on that ground; at the same time that he who searches the heart, sees his simplicity and godly sincerity.

10. But we may not only fall into the sin of *judging*, by condemning the innocent, but also, secondly, by condemning the guilty, in a higher degree than he deserves. This species of judging is likewise an offence against justice, as well as mercy; and yet such an offence as nothing can secure us from, but the strongest and tenderest affection. Without this, we readily suppose one who is acknowledged to be in fault, to be more in fault than he really is. We undervalue whatever good is found in him. Nay, we are not easily induced to believe, that any thing good can remain in him, in whom we have found any thing that is evil.

11. All this shews a manifest want of that love, which *ὁ λογίζεσθαι κακόν*, *thinketh no evil*: which never draws an unjust or unkind conclusion, from any premises whatsoever. Love will not infer, from a person's falling once into an act of open sin, that he is accustomed so to do, that he is habitually guilty of it: And if he was habitually guilty once, love does not conclude, he is so still:

still: much less, that if he is now guilty of this, therefore he is guilty of other sins also. These evil reasonings all pertain to that sinful judging, which our Lord here guards us against: and which we are in the highest degree concerned to avoid, if we love either God or our own souls.

12. But supposing we do not condemn the innocent, neither the guilty any farther than they deserve: still we may not be altogether clear of the snare. For there is a third sort of sinful judging, which is the condemning any person at all where there is not sufficient evidence. And be the facts we suppose ever so true, yet that does not acquit us. For they ought not to have been supposed but proved, and till they were, we ought to have formed no judgment: I say, till they were: for neither are we excused, although the facts admit of ever so strong proof, unless that proof be produced before we pass sentence, and compared with the evidence on the other side. Nor can we be excused, if ever we pass a full sentence, before the accused has spoken for himself. Even a Jew might teach us this, as a mere lesson of justice abstracted from mercy and brotherly love, "Doth our law," says Nicodemus, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?" John xvii. 51. Yea, a Heathen could reply, when the chief of the Jewish nation desired to have judgment against his prisoner, "It is not the manner of the Romans to judge any man, before he that is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him."

13. Indeed we could not easily fall into sinful judging, were we only to observe that rule, which another of those heathen Romans affirms to have been the measure of his own practice. "I am so far," says he, from highly believing every man's, or any man's evidence against another, that I do

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not easily or immediately believe a man's evidence against himself. I always allow him second thoughts, and many times council too." Go thou who art called a Christian, and do likewise, lest the Hea-then rise and condemn thee in that day.

14. But how rarely should we condemn or judge one another, at least, how soon would that evil be remedied, were we to walk by that clear and express rule, which our Lord himself has taught us? "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," (or if thou hear, or believe that he hath) "go and tell him of his fault, between him and thee alone." This is the first step thou art to take. "But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established." This is the second step." If he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church;" either to the Overseers thereof, or to the whole congregation. Thou hast then done thy part. Then think of it no more, but commend the whole to God.

15. But supposing thou hast, by the grace of God, "cast the beam out of thine own eye," and dost now "clearly see the mote or the beam which is in thy brother's eye," yet beware thou dost not receive hurt thyself, by endeavouring to help him. Still "give not that which is holy unto dogs." Do not lightly account any to be of this number. But if it evidently appear, that they deserve the title, then "cast ye not your pearls before swine." Beware of that zeal which is not according to knowledge. For this is another great hinderance in their way, who would be "perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect." They who desire this, cannot but desire that all mankind should partake of the common blessing. And when we ourselves first partake of the heavenly gift, the *divine evidence of things not seen*, we wonder that all mankind do not see, the things which we see so plainly, and make no doubt at all but we shall open the eyes of all we have any in-tercourse

tercourse with. Hence we are for attacking all we meet without delay, and constraining them to see, whether they will or no. And by ill success of this intemperate zeal, we often suffer in our own souls. To prevent this spending our strength in vain, our Lord adds this needful caution (needful to all, but more especially to those who are now warm in their first love :) "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you."

16. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." Beware of thinking, that any deserve this appellation, till there is full and incontestable proof, such as you can no longer resist. But when it is clearly and indisputably proved, that they are unholy and wicked men, not only strange s to, but enemies to God, to all righteousness and true holiness; *Give not that which is holy, το άγιον, the holy thing*, emphatically so called, unto these. The holy, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, such as were *hid from the ages and generations* of old, and are now made known to us, only by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of his holy Spirit; are not to be prostituted unto these men, who know not if there be any Holy Ghost. Not indeed that the Ambassadors of Christ can refrain, from declaring them in the great congregation, wherein some of these may probably be. We must speak, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. But this is not the case with private Christians. They do not bear that awful character; nor are they under any manner of obligation, to force these great and glorious truths, on them who contradict and blaspheme, who have a rooted enmity against them. Nay, they ought not so to do, but rather to lead them, as they are able to bear. Do not begin a discourse with these, upon remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. But talk with them in their own manner, and

and upon their own principles. With the rational, honourable, unjust Epicure, "reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." This is the most probable way to make *Felix tremble*. Reserve higher subjects for men of higher attainments.

17. "Neither cast your pearls before swine." Be very unwilling to pass this judgment on any man. But if the fact be plain and undeniable, if it is clear, beyond all dispute, if the swine do not endeavour to disguise themselves, but rather glory in their shame, making no pretence to purity, either of heart or life, but working all uncleanness with greediness; then *cast not ye your pearls before them*. Talk not to them of the mysteries of the kingdom: of the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; which of consequence, as they have no other inlets of knowledge, no spiritual senses, it cannot enter into their hearts to conceive. Tell not them of the exceeding great and precious promises, which God hath given us, in the Son of his Love. What conception can they have, of being made partakers of the divine nature, who do not even desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust? Just as much knowledge as swine have of pearls, and as much relish as they have for them, so much relish have they for the deep things of God, so much knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, who are immersed in the mire of this world, in worldly pleasures, desires and cares. O cast not those pearls before these, lest they trample them under their feet, lest they utterly despise what they cannot understand, and speak evil of the things which they know not. Nay, it is probable, this would not be the only inconvenience which would follow. It would not be strange, if they were, according to their nature, to turn again, and rend you; if they were to return you evil for good, cursing for blessing, and hatred for your good-will. Such is the enmity of
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the carnal mind, against God and all the things of God. Such the treatment you are to expect from these, if you offer them the unpardonable affront, of endeavouring to save their souls from death, to pluck them as brands out of the burning!

18. And yet you need not utterly despair even of these, who for the present turn again and rend you. For if all your arguments and persuasives fail, there is yet another remedy left; and one that is frequently found effectual, when no other method avails. This is prayer. Therefore whatever you desire or want, either for others or for your own soul, "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The neglect of this is a third grand hinderance of holiness. Still we "have not, because we ask not." O how meek and gentle, how lowly in heart, how full of love both to God and man, might ye have been at this day, if you had only asked? If you had continued instant in prayer! Therefore now, at least, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." *Ask*, that ye may thoroughly experience and perfectly practise the whole of that Religion, which our Lord has here so beautifully described. It shall then be given you, to be holy as he is holy, both in heart and in all manner of conversation. *Seek*, in the way he hath ordained, in searching the Scriptures, in bearing his word, in meditating thereon, in fasting, in partaking of the Supper of the Lord, and surely ye shall find. Ye shall find the pearl of great price, that faith which overcometh the world, that peace which the world cannot give, that love which is the earnest of your inheritance. *Knock*: continue in prayer, and in every other way of the Lord. Be not weary or faint in your mind. Press on to the mark. Take no denial. Let him not go until he bless you. And the door of mercy, of holiness, of heaven, shall be opened unto you.

19. It is in compassion to the hardness of our heart, so unready to believe the goodness of God, that our Lord is pleased to enlarge upon this head, and to repeat and confirm what he hath spoken. "For every one, saith he, that asketh, receiveth:" so that none need come short of the blessing: "and he that seeketh," even every one that seeketh "findeth," the love and the image of God: "and to him that knocketh," to every one that knocketh, the gate of righteousness shall be opened. So that here is no room for any to be discouraged, as though they might ask or seek or knock in vain. Only remember, always to pray, to seek, to knock and not to be faint. And then the promise standeth sure. It is firm as the pillars of heaven. Yea, more firm; for heaven and earth shall pass away; but his word shall not pass away.

20. To cut off every pretence for unbelief, our blessed Lord, in the following verses, illustrates yet farther what he had said, by an appeal to what passes in our own breasts. "What man, saith he, is there of you, who if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Will even natural affection permit you to refuse the reasonable request of one you love? "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Will he give him hurtful, instead of profitable things? So that even from what you feel and do yourselves, you may receive the fullest assurance, as, on the one hand, that no ill effect can possibly attend your asking, so on the other, that it will be attended with that good effect, a full supply of all your wants. For "if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven," who is pure, unmixed, essential goodness, "give good things to them that ask him?" Or, (as he expresses it on another occasion) "give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him?" In him are included all good things; all wisdom, peace, joy, love: the whole treasures of holiness and happiness:

all that God hath prepared for them that love him.

21. But that your prayer may have its full weight with God, see that ye be in charity with all men. For otherwise, it is more likely to bring a curse than a blessing on your own head: nor can you expect to receive any blessing from God, while you have not charity towards your neighbour. Therefore let this hinderance be removed without delay. Confirm your love towards one another and towards all men. And love them, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would, that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them: for this is the Law and the Prophets."

22. This is that royal law, that golden rule of Mercy as well as Justice, which even the heathen Emperor caused to be written, over the gate of his palace: a rule, which many believe to be naturally engraved on the minds of every one that comes into the world. And thus much is certain, that it commends itself, as soon as heard to every man's conscience and understanding: infomuch that no man can knowingly offend against it, without carrying his condemnation in his own breast.

23. "This is the law and the Prophets." Whatsoever is written in that law which God of old revealed to mankind; and whatsoever precepts God has given by his holy Prophets which have been since the world began, they are all summed up in those few words, they are all contained in this short direction. And this rightly understood, comprizes the whole of that Religion which our Lord came to establish upon earth.

24. It may be understood, either in a positive or negative sense. If understood in a negative sense, the meaning is, "Whatever ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye unto them." Here is a plain rule, always ready at hand, always easy to be applied. In all cases relating to your neighbour,

bour, make his case your own. Suppose the circumstances to be changed, and yourself to be just as he is now. And then beware that you indulge no temper or thought, that no word pass out of your lips, that you take no step which you should have condemned in him, upon such a change of circumstances. If understood in a direct and positive sense, the plain meaning of it is, "Whatsoever you could reasonably desire of him, supposing yourself to be in his circumstances, that do, to the uttermost of your power, to every child of man."

25. To apply this in one or two obvious instances. It is clear to every man's own conscience, we would not that others should judge us, should causelessly or lightly think evil of us. Much less would we that any should speak evil of us, should publish our real faults or infirmities. Apply this to yourself. Do not unto another what you would not he should do unto you; and you will never more judge your neighbour, never causelessly or lightly think evil of any one. Much less will you speak evil; you will never mention even the real fault of an absent person, unless so far as you are convinced, it is absolutely needful, for the good of other souls.

26. Again: we would that all men should love and esteem us, and behave towards us, according to justice, mercy, and truth. And we may reasonably desire, that they should do us all the good they can do, without injuring themselves: yea, that in outward things (according to the known rule) their superfluities should give way to our conveniencies, their conveniencies to our necessities, and their necessities to our extremities. Now then let us walk by the same rule: let us do unto all, as we would they should do to us. Let us love and honour all men. Let justice, mercy and truth, govern all our minds and actions. Let our superfluities give way to our neighbour's conveniencies:

(and who then will have any superfluities left?) Our conveniencies to our neighbour's necessities, our necessities to his extremities.

27. This is pure and genuine morality. This do and thou shalt live. "As many as walk by this rule, Peace be to them and mercy:" for they are "the Israel of God." But then be it observed, none can walk by this rule, (nor ever did from the beginning of the world) none can love his neighbour as himself, unless he first love God. And none can love God, unless he believe in Christ, unless he have redemption through his blood, and the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Faith therefore is still the root of all, of present as well as future salvation. Still we must say to every sinner, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Thou shalt be saved now, that thou mayest be saved for ever; saved on earth, that thou mayest be saved in heaven. Believe in him and thy faith will work by love. Thou wilt love the Lord thy God, because he hath loved thee: thou wilt love thy neighbour as thyself. And then it will be thy glory and joy, to exert and increase this love, not barely by abstaining from what is contrary thereto, from every unkind thought, word, and action, but by shewing all that kindness to every man, which thou wouldst he should shew unto thee.

S E R M O N XXX.

DISCOURSE the Eleventh upon our LORD'S
Sermon on the Mount.

MATT. VII. 13, 14.

“ Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat :

“ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

OUR Lord having warned us of the dangers which easily beset us at our first entrance upon real Religion, the hinderances which naturally arise from within, from the wickedness of our own hearts : now proceeds to apprise us of the hinderances from without, particularly ill example and ill advice. By one or the other of these, thousands who once ran well, have drawn back unto perdition : yea, many of those who were not novices in Religion, who had made some progress in righteousness. His caution therefore against these, he presses upon us, with all possible earnestness, and repeats again and again, in variety of expressions, lest by any means we should let it slip. Thus, effectually to guard us against the former, “ Enter ye in, saith he, at the strait gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat : Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it.” To secure us from the latter, “ Beware,

saith he, of false prophets." We shall at present consider the former only.

2. "Enter ye in, (saith our blessed Lord,) at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

3. In these words we may observe, first, The inseparable properties of the way to hell: "Wide is the gate, broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat:" secondly, The inseparable properties of the way to heaven: "Straits is that gate, and few there be that find it:" thirdly, A serious exhortation grounded thereon, "Enter ye in at the strait gate."

I. 1. We may observe, first, The inseparable properties of the way to hell. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat."

2. Wide indeed is the gate, and broad the way that leadeth to destruction. For sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction. And how wide a gate is that of sin? How broad is the way of wickedness! The *commandment* of God is *exceeding broad*, as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that rises in our heart. And sin is equally broad with the commandment, seeing any breach of the commandment is sin. Yea, rather it is a thousand times broader: since there is only one way of keeping the commandment: for we do not properly keep it, unless both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumstances are right. But there are a thousand ways of breaking every commandment: so that this gate is wide indeed.

3. To consider this a little more particularly. How wide do those parent sins extend, from which all

all the rest derive their being? That carnal mind which is enmity against God, pride of heart, self-will and love of the world? Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, on a close and faithful examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness, continually springing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an offspring do they bring forth, in every age and nation? Even enough to cover the whole earth with darkness *and cruel habitations*.

4. O! who is able to reckon up their accursed fruits? To count all the sins, whether against God or our neighbour, not which imagination might paint, but which may be matter of daily, melancholy experience? Nor need we range over all the earth to find them. Survey any one kingdom, any single country, or city, or town, and how plenteous is this harvest? And let it not be one of those, which are still overspread with Mahometan or Pagan darkness: but of those which name the name of Christ, which profess to see the light of his glorious gospel. Go no farther than the kingdom to which we belong, the city wherein we are now. We call ourselves Christians: yea, and that of the purest sort; we are Protestants; reformed Christians! But alas! who shall carry on the reformation of our opinions into our hearts and lives? Is there not a cause? For how innumerable are our sins? And those of the deepest dye? Do not the grossest abominations of every kind, abound among us from day to day? Do not sins of every sort cover the land, as the waters cover the sea? Who can count them? Rather go and count the drops of rain, or the sands on the sea-shore. *So wide is the gate, so broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.*

5. *And many there be that go in at that gate:* many who walk in that way. Almost as many as go in at the gate of death, as sink into the chambers of the grave. For it cannot be denied, (though neither can we acknowledge it but with shame and sorrow of heart) that even in this, which is called a Christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day live in sin; in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe: yea, in some outward transgression, some gross, visible kind of ungodliness or unrighteousness; some open violation of their duty, either to God or man. These then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to destruction. Add to these those who *have a name* indeed *that they live*, but were never yet alive to God: those that outwardly appear fair to men, but are inwardly full of uncleanness: full of pride, or vanity; of anger, or revenge; of ambition, or covetousness: lovers of themselves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These indeed may be highly esteemed of men; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will these saints of the world, swell the number of the children of hell? Yea, add all, whatever they be in other respects, whether they have more or less of the form of godliness, who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness," as the ground of their reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, of consequence have not "submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now all these things joined together in one, how terribly true is our Lord's assertion, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat."

6. Nor does this only concern the vulgar herd, the poor, base, stupid part of mankind. Men of eminence in the world, men who have many fields and yoke of oxen, do not desire to be excused from this. On the contrary, *many wise men after the flesh*, according to the human methods of judging, *many mighty*, in power, in courage, in riches, many *noble are called*: called into the broad way, by the world, the flesh and the devil; and they are not disobedient to that calling. Yea, the higher they are raised in fortune and power, the deeper do they sink into wickedness. The more blessings they have received from God, the more sins do they commit: using their honour or riches, their learning or wisdom, not as means of working out their salvation, but rather of excelling in vice, and so insuring their own destruction.

II. 1. And the very reason why many of these go on so securely in the *broad way*, is because it is broad: not considering that this is the inseparable property of the way to destruction. "Many there be, saith our Lord, who go in thereat:" for the very reason why they should flee from it: even "because strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

2. This is an inseparable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, unto life everlasting; so strait the gate, that nothing unclean, nothing unholy can enter. No sinner can pass through that gate, until he is saved from all his sins. Not only from his outward sins; from his evil "conversation received by tradition from his fathers." It will not suffice, that he hath *ceased to do evil*, and *learned to do well*. He must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all evil and useless discourse; but inwardly changed, thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind. Otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory.

3. For "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life:" the way of universal holiness. Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit, the way of holy mourning: the way of meekness, and that of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Narrow is the way of mercifulness, of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart; of doing good unto all men, and of gladly suffering evil, all manner of evil for righteousness sake.

4. "And few there be that find it." Alas! how few find even the way to heathen honesty? How few are there, that do nothing to another, which they would not another should do unto them? How few, that are clear before God, from acts either of injustice or unkindness? How few, that do not *offend with their tongue*; that speak nothing unkind, nothing untrue? What a small proportion of mankind, are innocent even of outward transgressions? And how much smaller a proportion have their hearts right before God? Clean and holy in his sight? Where are they, whom his all-searching eye, discerns to be truly humble? To abhor themselves in dust and ashes, in the presence of God their Saviour? To be deeply and steadily serious, feeling their wants, and *passing the time of their sojourning with fear*? Truly meek and gentle, never *overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good*? Thoroughly athirst for God, and continually panting after a renewal in his likeness? How thinly are they scattered over the earth, whose souls are enlarged in love to all mankind? And who love God with all their strength, who have given him their heart, and desire nothing else in earth or heaven? How few are those lovers of God and man, that spend their whole strength in doing good unto all men? And are ready to suffer all things, yea, death itself, to save one soul from eternal death?

5. But while so few are found in the way of life, and so many in the way of destruction, there is great danger, lest the torrent of examples should
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bear us away with them. Even as a single example, if it be always in our sight, is apt to make much impression upon us: especially when it has nature on its side; when it falls in with our own inclinations. How great then must be the force of so numerous examples, continually before our eyes; and all conspiring together with our own hearts, to carry us down the stream of nature? How difficult must it be, to stem the tide, and to keep ourselves *unspotted in the world*?

6. What heightens the difficulty still more is, that they are not the rude and senseless part of mankind, at least not these alone, who set us the example, who throng the downward way: but the polite, the well-bred, the genteel, the wise, the men who understand the world: the men of knowledge, of deep and various learning, the rational, the eloquent! These are all, or nearly all, against us. And how shall we stand against these? Does not their tongues drop manna? and have they not learnt all the art of soft persuasion? And of reasoning too: for these are versed in all controversies and strife of words. It is therefore a small thing with them to prove, that the way is *right*, because it is *broad*: that he who follows a multitude, cannot do evil, but only he who will not follow them: that your way must be *wrong*, because it is *narrow*; and because there are so few that find it. These will make it clear to a demonstration, that evil is good, and good is evil: that the way of holiness is the way of destruction, and the way of the world, the only way to heaven.

7. O how can unlearned and ignorant men, maintain their cause against such opponents! And yet these are not all with whom they must contend, however unequal to the task. For there are many mighty, and noble, and powerful men, as well as wise, in the road that leadeth to destruction. And these have a shorter way of confuting, than that of reason and argument. They usually apply, not to
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the understanding, but to the fears of any that oppose them. A method that seldom fails of success, even where argument profits nothing: as lying level to the capacities of all men: for all can fear, whether they can reason or no. [And all who have not a firm trust in God, a sure reliance both on his power and love, cannot but fear to give any disgust to those, who have the power of the world in their hands. What wonder therefore if the example of these is a law, to all who know not God?

8. Many rich are likewise in the broad way. And these apply to the hopes of men, and to all their foolish desires, as strongly and effectually, as the mighty and noble to their fears. So that hardly can you hold on in the way of the kingdom, unless you are dead to all below, unless you are crucified to the world and the world crucified to you, unless you desire nothing more but God.

9. For how dark, how uncomfortable, how forbidding is the prospect on the opposite side? A strait gate! A narrow way! And few finding that gate! Few walking in the way. Besides, even those few, are not wise men, not men of learning or eloquence. They are not able to reason either strongly or clearly: they cannot propose an argument to any advantage. They know not how to prove what they profess to believe; or to explain even what they say they experience. Surely such advocates as they, will never recommend, but rather discredit the cause they have espoused.

10. Add to this, that they are not noble, not honourable men: (if they were, you might bear with their folly.) They are men of no interest, no authority, of no account in the world. They are mean and base, low in life: and such as have no power, if they had the will to hurt you. Therefore there is nothing at all to be feared from them: and there is nothing at all to hope. For the greater part of them may say, "Silver and gold have I none."

none:" at least a very moderate share. Nay, some of them have scarce food to eat or raiment to put on. For this reason, as well as because their ways are not like those of other men, they are every where spoken against, are despised, have their names cast out as evil, are variously persecuted, and treated as the filth and offscouring of the world. So that both your fears, your hopes, and all your desires, (except those which you have immediately from God) yea, all your natural passions, continually incline you to return into the broad way.

III. 1. Therefore it is, that our Lord so earnestly exhorts, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Or (as the same exhortation is elsewhere expressed) *Strive to enter in.* *Αγωνίζεσθε εισελθῆναι, as in an agony.* "For many," saith our Lord, "shall seek to enter in," indolently strive, "and shall not be able."

2. It is true, he intimates what may seem another reason for this, for their *not being able to enter in*, in the words which immediately follow these. For after he had said, "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," he subjoins, "When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without," *ἀρξάντι ἔξω ἵσταναι.* Rather, *Ye stand without*; for *ἀρξάντι* seems to be only an elegant expletive:) "and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity," Luke xiii. 26, &c.

3. It may appear, upon a transient view of these words, that their delaying to seek at all, rather than their manner of seeking, was the reason why they were not able to enter in. But it comes, in effect, to the same thing. They were therefore commanded to depart, because they had been *workers of iniquity*, because they had walked in the broad road: in other words, because they had not ago-

nized to enter in at the strait gate. Probably they did *seek*, before the door was shut: but that did not suffice. And they did *strive*, after the door was shut. But then it was too late.

4. Therefore, *strive* ye now, in this your day, *to enter in at the strait gate*. And in order thereto, settle it in your heart, and let it be ever uppermost in your thoughts, That if you are in a broad way, you are in the way that leadeth to destruction. If many go with you, as sure as God is true, both they and you are going to hell. If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomless pit. Are many wise, many rich, many mighty, or noble, travelling with you in the same way? By this token, without going any farther, you know, it does not lead to life. Here is a short, a plain, and infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profession you are engaged, you must be singular or be damned. The way to hell has nothing singular in it; but the way to heaven is singularity all over: if you move but one step towards God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. It is far better to stand alone, than to fall into the pit. Run then with patience the race which is set before thee, though thy companions therein are but few. They will not always be so. Yet a little while and thou wilt "come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

5. Now then *strive to enter in at the strait gate*, being penetrated with the deepest sense, of the inexpressible danger your souls are in, so long as you are in a broad way: so long as you are void of poverty of spirit, and all that inward Religion, which the many, the rich, the wise account madness. "Strive to enter in," being pierced with sorrow and shame, for having so long run on with the unthinking crowd, utterly neglecting if not despising that holiness, without which no man can
see

see the Lord. Strive as in an agony of holy fear-
 lest, *a promise being made you of entering into his*
rest, even that rest which remaineth for the people of
God, you should nevertheless come short of it.
 Strive in all the fervor of desire, with groanings
that cannot be uttered. Strive by prayer without
 ceasing, at all times, in all places lifting up your
 heart to God, and giving him no rest, till you
awake up after his likeness and are satisfied with it.

6. To conclude, "Strive to enter in at the strait
 gate," not only by this agony of soul, of conviction,
 of sorrow, of shame, of desire, of fear, of unceas-
 ing prayer, but likewise by *ordering thy conversa-*
tion aright, by walking with all thy strength, in
 all the ways of God, the way of innocence, of
 piety and mercy. Abstain from all appearance of
 evil: do all possible good to all men: deny thyself,
 thy own will, in all things, and take up thy cross
 daily. Be ready to cut off thy right hand, to pluck
 out thy right eye and cast it from thee: to suffer
 the loss of goods, friends, health, all things on
 earth, so thou mayest enter into the kingdom of
 heaven.

S E R M O N XXXI.

DISCOURSE the TWELFTH upon our
 LORD'S SERMON on the MOUNT.

MATTHEW VII. 15—20.

"Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in
 sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are raven-
 ing wolves.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men
 gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

“ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

“ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

“ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.

“ Wherefore by their fruits, ye shall know them.”

1. **I**T is scarce possible to express or conceive, what multitudes of souls run on to destruction, because they would not be persuaded to walk in a *narrow* way, even though it were the way to everlasting salvation. And the same thing we may still observe daily. Such is the folly and madness of mankind, that thousands of men still rush on in the way to hell, only because it is a *broad* way. They walk in it themselves, because others do: because so many perish, they will add to the number. Such is the amazing influence of example, over the weak, miserable children of men! It continually peoples the regions of death, and drowns numberless souls in everlasting perdition.

2. To warn mankind of this, to guard as many as possible against this spreading contagion, God has commanded his watchmen to cry aloud, and shew the people the danger they are in. For this end he has sent his servants the Prophets, in their succeeding generations, to point out the narrow path, and exhort all men, not to be conformed to this world. But what if the watchmen themselves fall into the snare, against which they should warn others? What if *the Prophets prophesy deceits*? If they *cause the people to err from the way*? What shall be done, if they point out as the way to eternal life, what is in truth the way to eternal death? And exhort others to walk, as they do themselves, in the broad, not the narrow way?

3. Is this an unheard of, is it an uncommon thing? Nay, God knoweth, it is not. The instances

stances of it are almost innumerable. We may find them in every age and nation. But how terrible is this? When the Ambassadors of God, turn agents for the devil? When they who are commissioned to teach men the way to heaven, do in fact teach them the way to hell? These are like the locusts of Egypt, "which eat up the residue that had escaped, that had remained after the hail." They devour even the residue of men that had escaped, that were not destroyed by ill example. It is not therefore without cause that our wise and gracious Master, so solemnly cautions us against them: "Beware, saith he, of false Prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

4. A caution this of the utmost importance.— That it may the more effectually sink into our hearts, let us enquire, first, Who these false Prophets are: Secondly, What appearance they put on: and Thirdly, How we may know what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance.

I. 1. We are, first to enquire, Who these false Prophets are. And this is needful to do the more diligently, because these very men have so laboured to *wrest this scripture, to their own* (though not only their own) *destruction*. In order therefore to cut off all dispute, I shall raise no dust (as the manner of some is) neither use any loose, rhetorical exclamations, to deceive the hearts of the simple; but speak rough, plain truths, such as none can deny, who has either understanding or modesty left: and such truths, as have the closest connexion, with the whole tenor of the preceding discourse. Whereas too many have interpreted these words, without any regard to all that went before: as if they bore no manner of relation to the sermon, in the close of which they stand.

2. By *Prophets* here (as in many other passages of scripture, particularly in the New Testament)

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are meant, not those who foretel thing to come, but those who speak in the name of God: those men who profess to be sent of God, to teach others the way to heaven.

Those are *false Prophets*, who teach a false way to heaven, a way which does not lead thither. Or (which comes in the end to the same point) who do not teach the true.

3. Every broad way is infallibly a false one. Therefore this is one plain, sure rule, "They who teach men to walk in a broad way, a way that many walk in, are *false Prophets*."

Again, the true way to heaven is a narrow way. Therefore this is another plain, sure rule, "They who do not teach men to walk in a narrow way, to be singular, are *false Prophets*."

4. To be more particular. The only true way to heaven, is that pointed out in the preceding sermon. Therefore they are *false Prophets* who do not teach men to walk in *this way*.

Now the way to heaven pointed out in the preceding Sermon, is the way of lowliness, mourning, meekness, and holy desire, love of God and of our neighbour, doing good, and suffering evil for Christ's sake. They are therefore *false Prophets*, who teach us the way to heaven, any other way than *this*.

5. It matters not, what they call that other way. They may call it *faith*, or *good works*: or *faith and works*: or *repentance*: or *repentance, faith, and new obedience*. All these are good works. But if under these, or any other terms whatever, they teach men any way distinct from *this*, they are properly *false Prophets*.

6. How much more do they fall under that condemnation, who speak evil of this good way? But above all, they who teach the directly opposite way? The way of pride, of levity, of passion, of worldly desires, of loving pleasure more than God, of unkindness to our neighbour, of unconcern for good works,

works, and suffering no evil, no persecution for righteousness sake?

7. If it be asked, Why who ever did teach this? Or who does teach it, as the way to heaven? I answer, Ten thousand wise and honourable men: even all those, of whatever denomination, who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, the easy, careless, harmless, useless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness-sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are *false Prophets* in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the first-born of Satan: the eldest sons of Apollyon, the destroyer. These are far above the rank of ordinary cut-throats; for they murder the souls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night: and whenever they follow the poor souls whom they have destroyed, *Hell shall be moved from beneath, to meet them at their coming.*

II. 1. But do they come now, in their own shape? By no means. If it were so, they could not destroy. You would take the alarm, and flee for your life. Therefore they put on a quite contrary appearance: (which was the second thing to be considered.) "They come to you in sheep's clothing, although inwardly they are ravening wolves."

2. "They come to you in sheep's clothing;" that is, with an appearance of harmlessness. They come in the most mild, inoffensive manner, without any mark or token of enmity. Who can imagine, that these quiet creatures, would do any hurt to any one? Perhaps they may not be so zealous and active in doing good, as one would wish they were. However, you see no reason to suspect, that they have even the desire to do any harm. But this is not all:

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3. They come, secondly, with an appearance of usefulness. Indeed to this, to do good they are particularly called. They are set apart for this very thing. They are particularly commissioned, to watch over your soul, and to train you up to eternal life. It is their whole business, to “go about doing good, and healing those that are oppressed of the devil.” And you have been always accustomed to look upon them in this light, as messengers of God, sent to bring you a blessing.

4. They come, thirdly, with an appearance of Religion. All they do, is for conscience sake! They assure you, it is out of mere zeal for God, that they are making God a liar. It is out of pure concern for Religion, that they would destroy it, root and branch. All they speak, is only from a love of truth, and a fear lest it should suffer. And, it may be, from a regard for the Church, and a desire to defend her from all her enemies.

5. Above all, they come with an appearance of love. They take all these pains, only for *your* good. They should not trouble themselves about you, but that they have a kindness for you. They will make large professions of their good-will, of their concern for the danger you are in, and of their earnest desire, to preserve you from error, from being entangled in new and mischievous doctrines. They should be very sorry to see one who *means* so well, hurried into any extreme, preplexed with strange and unintelligible notions, or deluded into enthusiasm. Therefore it is, that they advise you, to keep still, in the plain middle way: and to beware of *being righteous overmuch*, lest you should *destroy yourself*.

III. 1. But how may we know, what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance? This was the third thing into which it was proposed to enquire.

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Our blessed Lord saw how needful it was for all men to know *false Prophets*, however disguised. He saw, likewise, how unable most men were, to deduce a truth through a long train of consequences. He therefore gives us a short and plain rule, easy to be understood by men of the meanest capacities, and easy to be applied upon all occasions, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

2. Upon all occasions you may easily apply this rule. In order to know whether any who speak in the name of God, are false or true Prophets, it is easy to observe, first, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to themselves? What effect has it had upon their lives? Are they holy and unblameable in all things? What effect has it had upon their hearts? Does it appear by the general tenor of their conversation that their tempers are holy, heavenly, divine? That the mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus? That they are meek, lowly, patient, lovers of God and man, and zealous of good works?

3. You may easily observe, secondly, What are the fruits of their doctrine, as to those that hear them? In many, at least, though not in all: For the Apostles themselves did not convert all that heard them. Have these the mind that was in Christ? And do they walk as he also walked? And was it by hearing these men, that they began so to do? Were they inwardly and outwardly wicked, till they heard them? If so, it is a manifest proof, that those are true Prophets, Teachers sent of God. But if it is not so, if they do not effectually teach either themselves or others to love and serve God; it is a manifest proof, that they are false Prophets; that God hath not sent them.

4. An hard saying this? How few can bear it? This our Lord was sensible of, and therefore condescends to prove it at large, by several clear and convincing arguments. "Do men, says he, gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" ver. 16. Do you expect that these evil men should bring forth good

good fruit? As well might you expect that thorns should bring forth grapes, or that figs should grow upon thistles! "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," ver. 17. Every true Prophet, every Teacher whom I have sent, bringeth forth the good fruit of holiness. But a false Prophet, a Teacher whom I have not sent, brings forth only sin and wickedness. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." A true Prophet, a Teacher sent from God, does not bring forth good fruit, sometimes only, but always; not accidentally, but by a kind of necessity. In like manner, a false Prophet, one whom God hath not sent, does not bring forth evil fruit, accidentally or sometimes only, but always and of necessity. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire," ver. 19. Such infallibly will be the lot of those Prophets, who bring not forth good fruit, who do not save souls from sin, who do not bring sinners to repentance. "Wherefore" let this stand as an eternal rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them," ver. 20. They who in fact bring the proud, passionate, unmerciful lovers of the world, to be lowly, gentle, lovers of God and man: they are true Prophets, they are sent from God, who therefore confirms their word. On the other hand, they whose hearers, if unrighteous before, remain unrighteous still, or at least, void of any righteousness which "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees:" they are false Prophets; they are not sent of God; therefore their words fall to the ground. And without a miracle of grace they and their hearers together, will fall into the bottomless pit.

5. *O beware of these false Prophets!* For though they come in sheep's clothing, yet inwardly they are ravening wolves. They only destroy and devour the flock: they tear them in pieces, if there is none to help them. They will not, cannot lead

you

you in the way to heaven. How should they? When they know it not themselves. O beware they do not turn you out of the way, and cause you to *lose what you have wrought*.

6. But perhaps you will ask, If there is such danger in hearing them, ought I to hear them at all? It is a weighty question, such as deserves the deepest consideration, and ought not to be answered, but upon the calmest thought, the most deliberate reflection. For many years, I have been almost afraid, to speak at all concerning it: being unable to determine one way or another, or to give any judgment upon it. Many reasons there are which readily occur, and incline me to say, "Hear them not." And yet what our Lord speaks concerning the false Prophets of his own times, seems to imply the contrary. "Then spake Jesus unto the multitude and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat," are the ordinary, stated Teachers in your Church: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do. But do not ye after their works; for they say and do not." Now that these were false Prophets in the highest sense, our Lord has shewn during the whole course of his ministry: as indeed he does in those very words, "They say and do not." Therefore by their fruits his disciples could not but know them, seeing they were open to the view of all men. Accordingly he warns them again and again, to *beware of these false Prophets*. And yet he does not forbid them to hear even these. Nay, in effect commands them so to do, in those words, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." For unless they heard them, they could not know, much less *observe whatsoever they bid them do*. Here then our Lord himself gives a plain direction, both to his Apostles and the whole multitude, in some circumstances, to hear even false Prophets, known and acknowledged so to be.

7. But perhaps it will be said, he only directed to hear them, when they read the Scripture to the congregation. I answer, at the same time that they thus read the Scripture, they generally expounded it too. And here is no kind of intimation, that they were to hear the one, and not the other also. Nay the very terms, "All things whatsoever they bid you observe," exclude any such limitation.

8. Again, unto them, unto false Prophets, undeniably such, is frequently committed (O grief to speak! For surely these things ought not so to be) the administration of the sacraments also. To direct men therefore, not to hear them, would be in effect to cut them off from the ordinances of God. But this we dare not do, considering the validity of the ordinance doth not depend on the goodness of him that administers, but on the faithfulness of him that ordained it, who will and doth meet us in his appointed ways. Therefore on this account likewise I scruple to say, hear not even the false Prophets. Even by these who are under a curse themselves, God can, and doth give us his blessing. For the bread which they break we have experimentally known to be "the communion of the body of Christ." And the cup which God blest, even by their unhallowed lips, was to us the communion of the blood of Christ.

9. All therefore which I can say is this: In any particular case, wait upon God by humble and earnest prayer, and then act according to the best light you have. Act according to what you are persuaded, upon the whole, will be most for your spiritual advantage. Take great care that you do not judge rashly; that you do not lightly think any to be false Prophets. And when you have full proof, see that no anger or contempt have any place in your heart. After this, in the presence and in the fear of God, determine for yourself. I can only say, if by experience you find, that the hearing them hurts your soul, then hear them not:

then

then quietly refrain, and hear those that profit you. If on the other hand, you find, it does not hurt your soul, you then may hear them still. Only *take heed how you hear: beware of them and of their doctrine.* Hear with fear and trembling, lest you should be deceived, and given up, like them, to a strong delusion. As they continually mingle truth and lies, how easy may you take in both together? Hear with fervent and continual prayer, to him who alone teacheth man wisdom. And see that you bring whatever you hear, *to the law and to the testimony.* Receive nothing untried, nothing till it is weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Believe nothing they say, unless it is clearly confirmed by plain passages of Holy Writ. Wholly reject whatsoever differs therefrom, whatever is not confirmed thereby. And in particular, reject, with the utmost abhorrence, whatsoever is described as the way of salvation, that is either different from or short of the way, our Lord has marked out in the foregoing discourse.

10. I cannot conclude, without addressing a few plain words, to those of whom we have now been speaking. O ye false Prophets, O ye dry bones, hear ye, for once, the word of the Lord. How long will ye lie in the name of God? Saying, God hath spoken: and God hath not spoken by you. How long will ye pervert the right ways of the Lord, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness? How long will ye teach the way of death, and call it the way of life? How long, will ye deliver to Satan the souls, whom ye profess to bring unto God?

11. Wo unto you, ye blind leaders of the blind? For ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Them that would strive to enter in at the strait gate, ye call back into the broad way. Them that have scarce gone one step in the ways of God, you devilishly caution against

going too far. Them that just begin to hunger and thirst after, righteousness you warn, not to be *righteous overmuch.* Thus you cause them to stumble at the very threshold; yea, to fall and rise no more. O wherefore do ye this? What profit is there in their blood, when they go down to the pit? Miserable profit to you. "They shall perish in their iniquity: but their blood will God require at your hands!"

12. Where are your eyes? Where is your understanding? Have ye deceived others, till you have deceived yourself also? Who hath required this at your hands, to *teach* a way which ye never *knew*? Are you *given up to so strong a delusion*, that ye not only teach, but *believe a lie*? And can you possibly believe, that God hath sent you? That ye are *his* Messengers? Nay; if the Lord had sent you, the *work of the Lord* would *prosper in your hand*. As the Lord liveth, if ye were Messengers of God, he would *confirm the word of his Messengers*. But the work of the Lord doth not prosper in your hand: you bring no sinners to repentance. The Lord doth not confirm your word: for you save no souls from death.

13. How can you possibly evade the force of our Lord's words? So full, so strong, so express? How can ye evade *knowing* yourselves *by your fruits*? Evil fruits of evil trees! And how should it be otherwise! "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" Take this to yourselves, ye to whom it belongs. O ye barren trees, why cumber ye the ground? "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." See ye not, that here is no exception? Take knowledge then, ye are not good trees: for ye do not bring forth good fruit. "But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." And so have ye done from the beginning. Your speaking as from God has only confirmed them that heard you, in the tempers, if not works of the devil. O take warning of him in whose name ye speak, before

fore the sentence he hath pronounced take place. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

14. My dear brethren, harden not your hearts. You have too long shut your eyes against the light. Open them now before it is too late; before you are cast into outer darkness. Let not any temporal consideration weigh with you: for eternity is at stake. Ye have run before ye were sent. O go no farther. Do not persist to damn yourselves and them that hear you! You have no fruit of your labours. And why is this? Even because the Lord is not with you. But can you go this warfare at your own cost? It cannot be. Then humble yourselves before him. Cry unto him out of the dust, that he may first quicken *thy* soul: give *thee* the faith that worketh by love: that is lowly and meek, pure and merciful, zealous of good works; rejoicing in tribulation, in reproach, in distress, in persecution for righteousness sake. So shall "the Spirit of glory and of Christ rest upon thee," and it shall appear that God hath sent thee. So shalt thou indeed "do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of thy ministry." So shall the word of God in thy mouth be "an hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces." It shall then be known by thy fruits, that thou art a Prophet of the Lord, even by the children whom God hath given thee. And having "turned many to righteousness, thou shalt shine as the stars for ever and ever!"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

